MONDAY
December 29, 2025

BENGALURU
CITY EDITION
16 Pages ₹ 6.00

THE HINDU

www.thehindu.com

INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

https://newsth.live/fb
https://newsth.live/x
https://newsth.live/ig

RNI No. KARENG/1970/49945

Vol. 56 • No. 307

Printed at » Chennai » Coimbatore » Bengaluru » Hyderabad » Madurai » Noida » Visakhapatnam » Thiruvananthapuram » Kochi » Vijayawada » Mangaluru » Tiruchirapalli » Kolkata » Hubballi » Mohali » Malappuram » Mumbai » Lucknow » Cuttack » Patna

DIFFERENT VOICES

Congress leaders react to Digvijaya's remarks

NEWS » PAGE 11

LEGITIMACY QUESTIONED

Myanmar holds first election under junta

WORLD » PAGE 14

'SPECIAL EXPERIENCE'

President goes on a submarine sortie

NEWS » PAGE 10

DEEP ROOTS

India and Iran, a strategic partnership

Revitalised ties will ensure regional stability

EDITORIAL » PAGE 8

EASILY DONE

Smriti, Shafali sizzle in India's fourth win

SPORT » PAGE 15

Eviction drive's link to Kerala polls

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The political row playing out after the demolition of "illegal" structures in Kogilu Layout in Bengaluru is being linked to the impending Assembly elections in Kerala next year.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan condemned the demolition drive in the layout with mostly Muslim residents – likening it to "Sangh Parivar's anti minority politics" – and soon after AICC general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal chastised the actions of the Congress dispensation in Karnataka.

These are seen as part of the perception battle between the CPI(M) and the Congress in Kerala, with the former keen to portray the latter as "anti-minority" in a State where Muslims for a large electorate.

FULL REPORT
» PAGE 6

Indian officials deny Bangladesh claims on Hadi's killers

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Dhaka rejects New Delhi's concerns over treatment of minorities in the neigbouring country

Indian official sources on Sunday denied the allegation of the Bangladeshi police that the suspects in the killing of Islamist youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi had crossed over from Bangladesh to Meghalaya, even as Dhaka rejected concerns raised by New Delhi over the treatment of minorities in the neighbouring country.

The Indian denial came soon after Additional Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police S.N. Nazrul Islam said that two suspects in the December 12 shooting of Hadi – Faisal Karim Masud and Alamgir Sheikh – had crossed into Meghalaya with the help of the local people and that two of the local assistants of the suspects were in the custody of Indian authorities. "We are maintaining communication with Indian authorities through both formal and informal channels to ensure their arrest and extradition," Mr. Islam said. However, diplomatic sources as well as senior officials in Meghalaya Police told *The Hindu* that the information shared by Mr. Islam was inaccurate.

Meanwhile, the spokesperson for Bangladesh's Foreign Ministry, S.M. Mahbubul Alam, called India's concerns over minorities, including Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists, "inaccurate, exaggerated, or motivated narrative" that does not reflect the facts.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

EC conditionally halts voter hearing under SIR in Bengal

District election officials asked not to summon voters identified as 'unmapped' but whose names or ancestral connections are present on 2002 list; Trinamool accuses EC of 'torturing' the elderly

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The Election Commission of India (EC), in a fresh set of instructions, has asked district election officials (DEOs) in West Bengal not to summon for hearings those voters identified as "unmapped", but whose names or ancestral connections were present on the 2002 voter list.

The move came amid a torrent of criticism against the poll body in the State over the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

A letter dated December 27 by the Additional Chief Electoral Officer (ACEO), West Bengal, to all DEOs said though hearing notices may have been generated from the system for such cases, these electors should not be called for hearing or hearing notices so generated in such cases need not be served, and instead be kept with the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO)/Assistant Electoral Registration Officer (AERO).

West Bengal Minister and Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim, left, with EC officials during a hearing under the SIR in Kolkata on Sunday. PTI

Meanwhile, the Trinamool Congress on Sunday criticised the EC, accusing it of asking elderly and ailing citizens, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) to attend hearings at camps far away from their residences.

"This is nothing short of torture. The EC sends polling personnel to the residences of elderly persons [during elections] due to mobility issues. Why could they not follow the same procedure this time?" Trinamool MP Partha Bhowmik said at a press conference.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

'Matua one of the most affected groups in Bengal'

KOLKATA
An analysis of the deletion of the voters of Assembly constituencies with majority of Matua population in West Bengal reveals a high number of permanently shifted and untraceable voters during the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. » PAGE 11

NEARBY

'VB G-RAM G Act will hit State's finances'

BENGALURU
Karnataka is staring at an additional expenditure of about ₹3,000 crore to ₹4,000 crore annually because the new vB-G RAM G requires the State government to fund 40% of the cost incurred. » PAGE 7

OTS scheme to clear water bills

BENGALURU
The Urban Development Department has approved a One Time Settlement (OTS) scheme for pending water bills in Bengaluru. The scheme will likely open in January and the window will be open for three months. » PAGE 3

EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGES 4 & 5

Hidden monument

Hard sight: The Taj Mahal in Agra covered by fog as people visit the iconic structure during the holiday season on Sunday. Poor air quality continues to trouble parts of North India. PTI

Maharashtra police bust 3 drug making units in city

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In a major crackdown on synthetic drug manufacturing ahead of the New Year, the Maharashtra Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) busted three illegal drug manufacturing units in Bengaluru. Sources said synthetic drugs worth crores were seized and four accused have been arrested.

The operation was carried out by the Konkan division of the Maharashtra ANTF following the trail of a recent drug seizure in Mumbai.

On December 21, the Maharashtra police seized drugs worth ₹1.5 crore in Mumbai and arrested Abdul Khader Shaikh. His interrogation led to the arrest of Prashant Yallappa Patil, a native of Belagavi, Karnataka.

Based on Patil's disclosure, ANTF teams conducted raids at three locations in Bengaluru, uncovering alleged full-fledged synthetic drug factories operating under the guise of an event management firm named "RJ Event".

The drug units were located in Horamavu, Yerapannahalli and Kannur. One of the factories was found operating from a shed built inside a farm, strategically located in a remote and isolated area to evade police attention, sources said.

During the raids, the police allegedly seized 4.1 kg of solid MD, 17 kg of liquid MD, totalling 21.4 kg of synthetic drugs. In addition, drug-manufacturing machinery, chemicals, and equipment were also confiscated.

The accused have been identified as Prashant Yallappa Patil (Belagavi), Suraj Ramesh Yadav (Rajasthan), Malkhan Ram Lal Bishnoi (Rajasthan) and one more associate.

PHOTO FOR REPRESENTATIONAL PURPOSE ONLY.

Investigators suspect the drugs were being supplied to multiple States across the country, with large-scale production under way specifically for New Year celebrations.

The case has triggered serious questions about Bengaluru Police's intelligence failure, as such large-scale drug manufacturing units were operating within city limits without detection.

This is the second such incident of drug factory busted. A mephedrone (MD) drug manufacturing factory operating out of a garage was busted in Mysuru in July 2025 through a joint operation by the Mumbai and Mysuru police, leading to four arrests and the seizure of drugs and raw materials valued at approximately ₹390 crore.

Claim false: Minister

Taking strong exception to the lapse on the part of the jurisdictional police, Home Minister G. Parameshwara ordered the City Police Commissioner to conduct a probe and submit a report.

However, Dr. Parameshwara said claims of a ₹58 crore seizure was far from the truth. He clarified that based on inputs from Maharashtra Police, a joint operation involving Mumbai Police, Bengaluru City Police, the NCB and SOCO teams led to the arrest of an accused in Bengaluru, who was found in possession of 4 kg of mephedrone chemical, valued at ₹1.2 crore.

He dismissed allegations that Bengaluru Police had failed to act, stating that joint inter-State operations are routinely conducted based on shared intelligence. Claims about three drug factories being unearthed were also termed false.

According to sources, the Home Minister made it clear that merely claiming seizures worth "hundreds of crores" would not absolve officers of responsibility.

Machine learning to predict landslips in Western Ghats

Rishita Khanna
BENGALURU

Researchers at the National Institute of Technology Karnataka (NITK), Surathkal, have developed an integrated landslide early warning framework designed specifically for the Western Ghats, one of India's most landslide-prone regions.

The system, called Slope Vulnerability and LandSlide Assessment (SVALSA), combines rainfall analysis, real-time monitoring of soil behaviour and surface movement, and machine learning to provide reliable landslide warnings while reducing false alarms.

The Western Ghats account for nearly 60% of reported landslides in India, with most triggered by intense and prolonged rainfall.

The Western Ghats account for nearly 60% of reported landslides in India, with most triggered by intense and prolonged rainfall.

Need for right alerts

Recent disasters, including the July 2024 Wayanad landslide, have highlighted the limitations of existing warning systems and the need for more accurate, site-specific alerts.

At present, landslide warnings in India are largely based on rainfall thresholds, where alerts are issued when rainfall crosses certain intensity or duration limits. These systems, while useful, often fail to account for what is happening inside the slope itself.

Beyond rain-only alerts

The SVALSA framework addresses this gap by moving beyond rainfall-only alerts. It integrates hydrological data, soil strength behaviour and visible surface deformation into a single decision system that reflects how slopes actually fail in the Western Ghats. More than 90% of landslides in the region occur in residual soils formed from weathered rock, where changes in moisture content and soil suction play a critical role in slope stability.

The SVALSA device is currently under patent application. The research was developed by Varun Menon under the supervision of Sreevalsa Kolathayar, with funding support from the Department of Science and Technology (DST), IMPRINT (Impacting Research Innovation and Technology), and the National Technical Textiles Mission (NTTM) under the Ministry of Textiles.

The system operates through a three-stage warning mechanism implemented as a Python-based algorithm on a compact processing unit.

In the first stage, rainfall data from government records and past landslides are analysed using a machine-learning method called K-Nearest Neighbour (KNN).

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 4

NY celebrations: 20,000 police personnel to be deployed

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

To ensure law and order and prevent any untoward incidents during New Year celebrations, the State government has deployed nearly 20,000 police personnel across Bengaluru, Home Minister G. Parameshwara said on Sunday.

Speaking to reporters after chairing a high-level security review meeting at the Bengaluru City Police Commissioner's office, the Home Minister said extensive precautionary and security measures have been put in place across the city.

Authorities expect a massive turnout this year, with an estimated over 10 lakh people likely to participate in celebrations, compared to more than eight lakh last year.

Based on past experience, M.G. Road, Brigade Road, Indiranagar, Koramangala, and Neeladri Road in Electronics City have been identified as high-footfall zones.

For the first time, police have introduced a Heat Map system to monitor crowd density. Areas with heavy crowds will be marked in red, moderate crowds in yellow, and low density in green, all monitored from the command centre. A QR code-based information system has also been launched to provide real-time updates on traffic, ambulances and emergency services.

Of the total deployment, 14,000 personnel will handle law and order, 2,500 traffic police, 88 KSRP platoons, 21 CAR units, 266 Hoysala patrol vehicles, 250 Cobra vehicles, and 400 traffic wardens. Civil Defence volunteers and Home Guards have also been pressed into service.

Dr. Parameshwara said arrangements have been made to ensure people can return home safely, especially from areas with bars, restaurants, metro corridors and entertainment hubs.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 4

Two-day games poor advertisement for Test cricket

The longest format of the game, particularly, is meant to be an equal contest between bat and ball, with the odds slightly tilted in favour of the latter. The MCG Test provided anything but that

AFP

R. Kaushik

The Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground isn't just a cricket match. It's a social gathering, a coming together of peoples, a spectacle that is often the best way to bring the curtain down on a year of compelling action. It generates a buzz and an enthusiasm akin to a home side contesting the final of a global tournament; the energy is constant and infectious, the air crackling with electricity and bonhomie, all with no little help from Bacchus.

It's a stop on the cricket calendar eagerly awaited for reasons beyond cricket, though the sport is invariably the driving force. And yet, here we are, on the scheduled day three of five, engaged in post mortems and critiques, wondering how such a fiercely anticipated showpiece devolved into a damp squib.

Upwards of 90,000 people crammed the marquee stadium, affectionately called the 'G', on each of the two days that witnessed play. The action was frenetic, furious, maybe even fascinating. Test cricket, particularly, is meant to be an equal contest between bat and ball, with the odds slightly tilted in favour of the latter. The MCG provided anything but that as the fourth Ashes Test got over before you could say Steve Smith and Ben Stokes in the same breath.

Vocal critics

Smith and Stokes have been among the vocal critics of a grass-laden knoll that made batting impossibly hazardous. One cursory look at curator Matt Page's creation was enough for both captains to jettison any distant thoughts of fielding a specialist spinner. Both sides went seam heavy, hoping to rely on part-time spinners if the need arose. That need, as we all know now, hardly did.

In all, the Boxing Day showdown lasted 852 deliveries. That's 142 overs, condensed into two days of fast-forward frenzy, culminating in a nervy four-wicket win for the visiting side.

You'd think that the captain of a team that had won a Test down under after 5,468 days would be delighted at the outcome. But Stokes, the maverick with the heart of a warrior, minced no words as he slammed the playing surface, unequivocally laying into the green carpet.

Every team would like to make the most of home advantage. But by producing 'doctored' pitches, aren't they selling themselves short, much like India have been doing by rolling out turners of dubious bounce at home?

"Being brutally honest, that's not really what you want. Boxing Day Test match. You don't want a game finishing in less than two days. Not ideal," Stokes thundered, before adding, "I'm pretty sure if that was somewhere else in the world, there'd be hell on. Not the best thing for games that should be played over five days."

At the press conference where he made these comments, the all-rounder was asked if 'somewhere else in the world' was directed at spin-friendly pitches in the subcontinent. "Your words, not mine," was the riposte.

Much-needed victory

For England, this victory was much needed after the flak they have received over their preparations coming into the Ashes, their insipid performances in the first three matches, and an alleged drinking binge when on vacation in the long gap between the third and the fourth Tests. It has reignited, if only just, their World Test Championship prospects; on the other hand, Australia have surrendered their hitherto all-win record, undone by the 11 millimetres of grass that Page, in his infinite wisdom, laid out for pacers from both sides to feast on.

Even in isolation, a 142-over Test that saw 36 wickets crumble inside two days for just 572 runs scored is an alarming development. Combine it with what happened at the Optus Stadium in Perth five weeks previously, and it is clear that Cricket Australia (CA) must start to ask its member units how things have been allowed to come to such a pass. In the first Test that usually sets the tone for the rest of the series, Australia raced to an eight-wicket victory on the back of an outrageously freakish century by Travis Head. The irrepressible left-hander took his chances on being promoted as an opener in Usman Khawaja's unavailability, though 123 off 83 deliveries can hardly be dismissed as chancy.

Until the Head carnage that decisively settled the contest, the ball had once again been the dominant entity. The first three innings of the Test yielded a frugal 468 runs in 112.5 overs. The hectic rate of scoring – England went at 5.23 and 4.73 an over in piecing together 172 and 164 respectively – was due to the fact that no batter felt he could trust the pitch, that he had to lash out before the ball with his name on it arrived at some stage. Harry Brook's 52 in the England first innings was the only knock of any substance, until Head tore prediction sheets to shreds by making a fourth-innings target of 205 appear tiny and grossly inadequate.

Falling like ninepins

As many as 19 wickets fell on day one at the Optus; the MCG topped that with 20, both first innings ending before stumps and the hosts even getting to bat for one over in the second innings. Even accounting for the fact that batting standards have dipped somewhat in recent years, these are unacceptable numbers. How can such diabolical statistics not attract sanction and censure and penalties to go with the ridicule that is already ruling the social media waves?

CA chief Todd Greenberg didn't hold back as he reflected on the second two-day finish in four games. "A simple phrase I'd use is short Tests are bad for business," he remarked. "I can't be much more blunt than that." Greenberg donned his financial rather than cricketing hat, perhaps dismayed by the potential $6.7 million loss that didn't allow him to 'sleep well' after the first day of the MCG fiasco. But he did strike the right note. Hopefully, he will now put the (much reduced) money where his mouth is and embark on course correction, sooner rather than later.

Australia once was the perfect place to play cricket in simply because of the vast differences in the nature of the playing surfaces across the huge country. The hallowed WACA ground in Perth – replaced by the Optus in December 2018 – and the Gabba in Brisbane tested technique and mettle, courtesy pace and bounce.

The Adelaide Oval was largely a very good batting surface before starting to help the spinners as the game went on, the Sydney Cricket Ground was the most spin-friendly of the lot and the MCG was a combination of The Oval and the SCG.

Consequently, in a long series, or even in a three-match showdown, cricketers of every ilk had the opportunity to showcase their wares. They could rely on their skills to make an impact instead of riding their luck and hoping for the best, like has been the case in the last few years. The MCG and the SCG have totally changed in character, and there is a similarity to the tracks, most of them drop-in, that have dulled some of the charm of Test cricket in Australia.

The convenient and lazy reasoning for this development will be the quest for the World Test Championship (WTC) points, but Australia have been picking up points in most venues. If they missed out on qualifying for the inaugural final in 2021, it was less because of cricketing inadequacies and more due to their tardy over-rates. The docked points for slow over-rates allowed New Zealand to sneak ahead of them and into the final, where the Kiwis schooled India in Southampton. Australia have contested each of the next two finals, winning against India in 2023 and going down to Temba Bavuma-inspired South Africa at Lord's this summer.

Do they need external help to bolster their chances? Sure, every team will welcome the opportunity to make the most of home advantage. But by producing decks with 11mm grass, aren't they selling themselves short, much like India have been doing by rolling out turners of dubious bounce at home that their batters aren't equipped to flourish on and which have brought opposition spinners of modest skills into the equation more and more?

Greg Chappell, the wonderfully articulate former India coach, once told this writer that if the stakeholders themselves are disrespectful of the game, it is impossible to expect the fans to be energised by Test cricket. "When the game itself denigrates the longest form of the game, it is understandable that the public might not be as stimulated by it, which is a great shame because I still think the greatest form of the game is the long form," he said. "We've allowed the game to be showcased poorly, and it is no surprise to me that we have probably got a generation of people that never really understood what the attraction of Test cricket is."

Chappell was referring more to 'your 550 plays my 600', which used to be the case in the subcontinent for long when winning wasn't as important as not losing. That was in the pre-WTC era; now the onus is on results and therefore 'doctored' pitches designed to maximise the benefit of playing in one's backyard, though we have seen, especially in India in the last 14 months, how spectacularly the best-laid plans can unravel.

Stokes has stoked the fire by talking about 'somewhere else in the world' during his takedown of the MCG surface. In a way, he was echoing Rohit Sharma's thoughts of January 2024, when the then Indian Test captain lambasted the Newlands track in Cape Town after it was the scene of another two-day game. Interestingly, like Stokes, Rohit too was on the winning side on an abomination of a surface where the chances of succeeding with the bat were less than those of winning a lottery.

After Mohammed Siraj helped bowl South Africa out for 55 on the first morning and India completed a seven-wicket on the second afternoon, Rohit let loose: "We saw what happened in this match, how the pitch played. I honestly don't mind playing on pitches like this. As long as everyone keeps their mouth shut in India and don't talk too much about Indian pitches."

Point taken, Rohit, though at the end of the day, it must not be about where the pitches are below-par, or which aspects of the sport are taken out of the equation. Test cricket owes its most passionate stakeholders, the uncelebrated fans, respect and gratitude. Two-day games are hardly the way to showcase that.

THE GIST

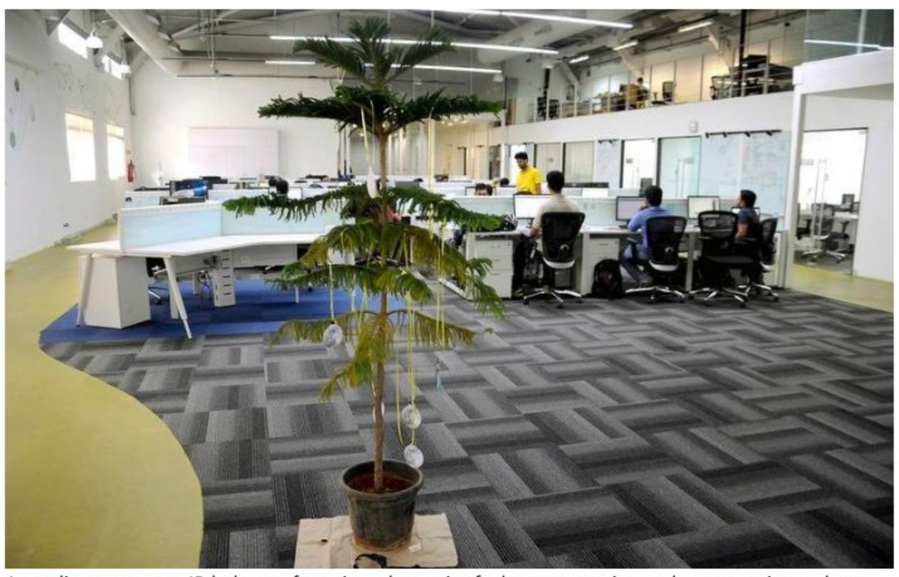
- In all, the Boxing Day showdown lasted 852 deliveries. That's 142 overs, condensed into two days of fast-forward frenzy, culminating in a nervy four-wicket win for the visiting side
- The MCG and the SCG have totally changed in character, and there is a similarity to the tracks, most of them drop-in, that have dulled some of the charm of Test cricket in Australia. The convenient and lazy reasoning for this development will be the quest for WTC points
- Test cricket owes its most passionate stakeholders, the uncelebrated fans, respect and gratitude

Start-up ecosystem in 2025: Many hits, a few misses

In a year when AI became the centre of conversations, Bengaluru is ranked fifth among the top 50 AI ecosystems globally; Indian deep tech start-ups attracted more than $1.5 billion in 2025

Shilpa Elizabeth
BENGALURU

For the start-up ecosystem in Karnataka, the year 2025 was one of ebbs and flows. But as the year comes to an end, the net sentiment seems to be positive, and stakeholders are looking at 2026 with optimism.



According to experts, IP-led manufacturing, alternative fuel, transportation and consumption tech are also expected to fare well in the coming days. FILE PHOTO

2025, THE YEAR THAT WAS

Highlights

In a year when AI became the centre of conversations, Bengaluru is ranked fifth among the top 50 AI ecosystems globally, as per the Global Start-up Ecosystem Report 2025. It climbed seven spots to reach 14th place in the Global Start-up Ecosystem Ranking.

It was also the year when deep tech claimed its spotlight. Minister for IT-BT Priyank Kharge, who termed it the 'deep tech-decade', announced an investment pool of ₹600 crore for deep tech start-ups in sectors such as AI, machine learning, quantum computing, advanced manufacturing and robotics. Announcements such as Fund of Funds during the 2025 Budget and the ₹1,000 crore LEAP programme to boost innovation beyond Bengaluru were other highlights. "This year saw a fundamental pivot toward sustainability. Founders are tightening their operations and focusing on unit economics and real-world outcomes," said Abhineet Kumar, CEO & co-founder at Rocket Health. Ankit Alok Bagaria, CEO & founder at Loopworm, felt that Bengaluru's move to 14th place in the rankings signals the rise of quality start-ups and the ecosystem moving beyond the 'number of deals' KPI. till here.

Wish list

- More funding activity after a dip in overall funding in 2025
- Bigger orders by the government for indigenous technologies developed by deep tech start-ups
- Deep tech-friendly clusters in tier-2 cities with the help of LEAP
- Better industry-academia collaboration

Increase

Indian deep tech start-ups attracted more than $1.5 billion in 2025, an increase from $1.17 billion the previous year, according to Tracxn.

Aridni Shah, cofounder and CEO at ImmunitoAI, pointed out that many VCs now have dedicated teams and theses to invest in deep-tech, which wasn't the case a few years ago.

Following Operation Sindoor, conversations around the need for indigenous technology for national security and sovereign interests brought increased attention on sectors such as Aerospace and Defence.

"We've seen a lot of progress in space tech. A variety of start-ups are coming up in robotics, industrial automation, precision manufacturing, among others. Another area that is picking up, especially in Bengaluru, is quantum," noted Madan Padaki, president at TiE Bangalore.

IP-led manufacturing, alternative fuel, transportation and consumption tech are also expected to fare well in the coming days according to experts.

Taslimarif Saiyed, CEO and director of C-CAMP, added that new start-ups are emerging in therapeutics, biotech, diagnostics, agriculture, digital health, and climate-tech.

Funding challenges

On the dimmer side of things, data from Tracxn showed a 37% dip in overall start-up funding in Bengaluru compared to 2024.

"Fundraising took longer, and investors asked tougher questions. But capital didn't disappear; it became selective," said Iesh Dixit, co-founder and CEO of Powerplay.

Investors, nevertheless, seem to be upbeat. Anurag Ramdasan, partner at 3one4 Capital, felt that the drop in funding in 2025 is inconsequential because in 2024 most of the funding went to a few start-ups that raised very large rounds.

According to him, what the ecosystem requires is enough start-ups having access to enough capital. "There is still significant dry powder left despite everything that has played out this year. So, next year is going to be even bigger."

Hopes for 2026

With 2026 around the corner, Mr. Bagaria foresees an increase in growth-stage and late-stage capital as businesses become more robust, while Mr. Ramadasan hopes to see big orders from the government for technologies developed by Indian start-ups.

Trisha Chatterjee, co-founder and CTO at ImmunitoAI, hopes for better industry-academia collaboration.

The premium institutes in the State seem to be moving towards this. "This year, we onboarded several new start-ups and the portfolio now stands at 140+ deep science and tech incubatees," noted Raj Waghray, chief executive at STEM cell, the deep-tech start-up incubator at FSID, IISc.

Allegations of loss of grasslands surface over water harvesting pits inside Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary

Shilpa Elizabeth
BENGALURU

Allegations have surfaced that the water harvesting pits dug by the Forest Department inside Cauvery wildlife sanctuary is resulting in loss of natural grasslands.

According to an environmentalist in the region, heavy machinery is being used to dig pits in Sangama, Halagur, and Mugguru ranges of the sanctuary, causing destruction of the grasslands.

An environmentalist says that heavy machinery is being used to dig pits in Sangama, Halagur, and Mugguru ranges of the sanctuary, causing destruction of the grasslands. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"Several heavy machinery have destroyed natural grasslands in the name of digging water harvesting pits in the region. These grasslands are critical for providing fodder for elephants, sambar, spotted deer, gaur, and other herbivores. This destruction of natural grassland will impact fodder availability to wild ungulates ultimately increasing human-wildlife conflict," he said.

Terming it "illogical and unscientific", the environmentalist said that the department, on the one hand, has been cutting down trees to grow grasslands, claiming that it would provide fodder for wild herbivores and help reduce human-wildlife conflict, while on the other hand, spending more money to destroy natural grasslands inside the forest. "The Cauvery sanctuary has woodland savannah habitats that are being destroyed. Several hundreds of pits have been dug using earthmovers. At the same time, in the same sanctuary, the temporary watchers have not been paid salaries for two months," he said. The Forest Department officials, however, denied that the activity is resulting in loss of grasslands.

"The pits are being dug to conserve the soil moisture content in the forest. It will only help in regrowth of grass and plants and might even help to germinate the seeds of trees like Teak which are deep within the soil. Some of these trees at its pole stage is good fodder for elephants," said Surendra M.C., Deputy Conservator of Forests, Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary.

He noted that the initiative is being carried out under the MGNREGA scheme and the funds are being provided by the Gram Panchayat. Mr. Surendra also denied that heavy machinery are being used for the activity and claimed that the job was being done manually.

"Rain is scanty in Chamarajnagar causing soil moisture problems. Even BRT Hills got good rains this year. But it has been scanty in M.M. Hills and Cauvery," he said, adding that the pits will also help to prevent runoff.

The trenches according to him are around one metre deep and bamboo seeds have been spread inside them.

Siddappa Shetty, ethnobotanist and senior fellow at ATREE, noted that while the activity could help with water conservation for the wildlife, it need to be done scientifically. "In Cauvery sanctuary, apart from near the Cauvery River, other places do not have so much water in the dry season. So, the activity, if done correctly can help with water conservation inside the forests, especially given that the wildlife population is also increasing," he said.

"But instead of doing it everywhere and going overboard, the department should ensure that it is done scientifically and based on the contours. There are some lakes and ponds already inside the forest and natural ponds that were historically used by communities in the region. Those can be desilted and revitalised. It is also important that the department ensures community participation," he added.

Rooftop solar plants commissioned at 148 stations

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Rooftop solar plants have been commissioned at 148 railway stations across South Western Railway (SWR) zone, as part of Indian Railways' push towards renewable energy adoption and its goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2030.

South Western Railway zone's cumulative installed solar capacity has reached 7,491.6 kWp as of November 2025. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

According to officials, the large-scale rollout of solar photovoltaic systems spans stations, service and administrative buildings, workshops, traction and non-traction installations, level crossing gates and water pumping systems across Karnataka and parts of Goa under SWR. Major stations equipped with rooftop solar facilities include Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna (KSR) Bengaluru Railway Station at Majestic, Hubballi, Mysuru, Dharwad, Belagavi, Hosapete, Gadag and Ballari.

In addition to stations, 38 service buildings, including Rail Soudha, divisional offices, railway hospitals and training institutes, have been fitted with solar installations.

"Key production and maintenance units such as the Hubballi Workshop (1,045 kilo Watt Peak kWp), Mysuru Workshop (530 kWp), Krishnarajapuram Diesel Loco Shed (240 kWp) and Hubballi EMD Shed (640 kWp) have further strengthened the zone's renewable energy footprint. Solar rooftop systems have also been installed at 302 level crossing gates, ensuring uninterrupted and environment-friendly power supply," a senior SWR official said.

The official further said that the SWR zone's cumulative installed solar capacity has reached 7,491.6 kWp as of November 2025, reflecting a steady rise from 6,986 kWp at the end of the previous financial year. "This increase underlines our systematic and sustained approach towards renewable energy adoption. Regular cleaning, preventive maintenance and performance monitoring have helped improve the capacity utilisation factor and ensure optimum output," the official added.

During the current financial year 2025-26, up to October, SWR generated 4.13 million units of solar power, resulting in savings of approximately ₹2.61 crore. In 2024-25, solar generation stood at 6.86 MU, translating into savings of about ₹4.07 crore. Officials noted that consistent year-on-year growth in solar power generation has contributed significantly to reducing electricity procurement costs.

Beyond rooftop installations, SWR has leveraged open access renewable power procurement, with 36 traction sub-stations operating under such arrangements.

Newborn taken to Hubballi from Koppal in zero-traffic corridor

The Hindu Bureau
KALABURAGI

A newborn boy suffering from a critical congenital condition was shifted from the Koppal Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) to Karnataka Medical College and Research Institute (KMCRI) Hospital, Hubballi, under a specially arranged zero-traffic corridor on Sunday to ensure timely life-saving treatment. The baby was born in Koppal district late on Saturday night. The newborn belongs to Mallappa and Vijayalakshmi, residents of Guttur village in Kuknoor taluk. Doctors noticed that the newborn had severe complications, with the intestines protruding outside the abdominal cavity, necessitating immediate advanced medical intervention. Five ambulances were deployed to ensure uninterrupted movement, and police regulated traffic.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The General Public is hereby informed that my client **Mr. MANISH KUMAR K, C/o. Kantilal Jain,** No.7, 6th Floor, Subramani Lane, Akkipet Cross, Cottonpet Main Road, Chickpet, Bengaluru-560053, Aadhar : 4056 2036 8593, intends to purchase an immovable residential house property bearing old No.98, New No.126/16, PID No.49-6-126/16, situated at Mahantha Layout, K. G. Nagar, GBA (previously BBMP) ward No. 142-Sunkenahalli, EPID No. 2737444798, whose site measuring East - West : 60 Ft. /18.3 Meters, and North - South : 23½ Ft./7.2 Meters, totally measuring 1410 Sq. Ft./131 Sq. Meters, together with an existing RCC roof house building thereon, comprising of Ground and First Floors, with a total built up area of around 1399 Sq. Ft, /130 Sq. Meters, with all the civic amenities, and bounded on East by Road, West by Property of Mr. R. Ramadas, North by Property bearing No. 6/6 of Mrs. Padma, South by Property bearing No.123/3 of Mr. J. K. Jain and new building, and has entered into an Agreement of Sale (without possession) with respect to the above said property, with its owner, which is registered as the document No. BSG-1-03291-2025-26, dated 19-08-2025, before the Senior Sub Registrar, Basavanagudi, Bengaluru. In case any person has any right, title, interest, claim of whatsoever nature, by way of sale, gift, lease, heir ship, possession, or any other nature in respect of the aforesaid property, the same should be known in writing to me at the address below with the documentary proof within seven **(7) days** from the date hereof, failing which it shall be construed that such claim is waived, abandoned.

(BHARATH KUMAR .V)
Advocate
No. 4/2, 2nd Floor, Shamsuddin Block, HHS & HMS Complex, Cubbonpet Main Road, Bengaluru – 560002.
Ph : 98456 29337,
e-mail : bharath.advocates@gmail.com

Government of Goa
Department of Tourism
Paryatan Bhavan, Patto, Panaji, Goa
Tel: 0832-2494200/17, Fax: 0832-2494227
Email: deptgoatourism@gmail.com **Web:goatourism.gov.in**

No.4/2(376) PR/2025/DT/5211 **Date: 26.12.2025**

BRIEF TENDER NOTICE (E-TENDERING MODE ONLY)

Department of Tourism, Government of Goa invites e-tenders from single entities, and consortium for **"APPOINTMENT OF AN INTEGRATED MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGEMENT AGENCY FOR GOA TOURISM".** Agencies interested in applying for the tender may submit their duly filled application with complete information as required as per the tender document. The last date for submission of bids is **08.01.2026 up to 3.30 pm.** For detailed Tender Notice and for participation in e-tender please visit our e-tender website https://eprocure.goa.gov.in. All queries may be emailed to dir-tour.goa@nic.in.

Sd/-
Director of Tourism,
Government of Goa

Your feedback will keep us Cleaner, Sharper and Bolder

Call our toll-free number
1800 102 1878
Or write to us at
customercare@thehindu.co.in

Scan the QR code to register your feedback

THE HINDU · the hindu businessline · FRONTLINE · SPORTSTAR · The Hindu Young World · THE HINDU

KARNATAKA STATE POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD
#49, "Parisara Bhavan", 1st to 5th Floor, Church Street, Bengaluru-560001, Karnataka,
Phone: 25581383, 25589112, 25586520, Fax: 080-25586321
E-mail: ho@kspcb.gov.in, Website: https://kspcb.karnataka.gov.in

No. PCB 108 INFRA EPH 2025/3911 **Date:24/12/2025**

ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEARING NOTIFICATION

Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board has proposed for formation of **"Mailanahalli Industrial Area"** in an extent of 142.16 Acres (57.53Hectares) located at Mailanahalli Village, Arasikere Taluk, Hassan District. The Project requires Environmental Clearance as per EIA Notification dated **14.09.2006,** and it is required to conduct Environmental Public Hearing process. Accordingly, the Project Proponent has obtained Terms of Reference (ToR) issued by the State Level Environment Impact Assessment Authority -Karnataka dated **04.01.2025** vide File No. SEIAA 25 IND 2024, proposal No. SIA/KA/INFRA1/448540/2024 dtd: **26.10.2024**. As per project proponent request letter No. **KIADB/EE/HSN/Mailanahalli/Draft EIA/708/2025-26,** dated: 08.08.2025 & RO-Hasan letter No.KSPCB/RO (Hassan)/EPH/2025-26/1302, dated: **02.12.2025,** the Environmental Public hearing is scheduled by the Deputy Commissioner, Hassan District on **30th January 2026, Friday at 12:00 PM.** The Environmental Public Hearing is being conducted by the Board as per details given below;

1. Name of the Company & Address : Executive Engineer, Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board, Zonal Office, Industrial Growth Centre, H.N Pura Road, Hassan -573201.
2. Proposed location of the project : "Mailanahalli Industrial Area" in an extent of 142.16 (57.53 Hectares) Acres located at Mailanahalli Village, Arasikere Taluk, Hassan District.
3. Details of activity : Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board has proposed for formation of "Mailanahalli Industrial Area" in an extent of 142.16 Acres (57.53 Hectares) located at Mailanahalli Village, Arasikere Taluk, Hassan District under 7 (C), 'B1" Category as per EIA, Notification 2026.
4.Date, time and venue of Public hearing: Date: 30th January 2026, (Friday) Time: 12:00 PM Place: Proposed project site at Sy. No. 7, 94, 69, 97, 107, 108, 110, 111, 112, 113/2, 114, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, Mailanahalli Village, Arasikere Taluk, Hassan District.
5.Capital Investment: Date: Rs.53.83Cr. (Project cost)

6. Places of availability of project documents kept open for public: (1) Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Hassan District. **(2)** Office of the Chief Executive Officer, Zilla Panchayath, Hassan District. **(3)** District Industries Centre, Hassan District. **(4)** Office of Tahasildar, Arasikere Taluk, Hassan District. **(5)** Taluk Panchayath office, Arasikere Taluk, Hassan District. **(6)** Grama Panchayath Office, Pannasamudra, Hassan Taluk. **(7)** Office of the Senior Environmental Officer- Mysuru, Plot No.436-D, 1st Floor, Hebbal Industrial Area, K.R.S Road, Metagalli, Mysuru-570016. **(8)** Office of the Regional Officer, Karnataka State Pollution Control Board, "Parisara Bhavan", Plot No. 1-A, B.Katihalli Industrial Area, B.M.Road, Hassan-573201. **(9)** Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change, South Zone Office, E-3/240, Kendriya Sadan, 4th Floor, E&F Wings, 17th Main Road, 2nd Block, Koramangala, Bengaluru-560034. **(10)** State Level Environment Impact Assessment Authority-Karnataka (SEIAA), 4th Gate, 7th Floor, Forest Ecology and Environmental Department, MS Building, Bengaluru -560001. **(11)** HELP DESK, Karnataka State Pollution Control Board, Ground Floor, No.49, Parisara Bhavan, Church Street, Bengaluru – 560001.

NOTE: Suggestions, views, comments and objections of interested bonafide residents, environmental groups and others located at project site who are likely to be affected by the proposed project are invited, within 30 days from the date of publication of this Notification. They can also make oral/written/E-Mail suggestions to the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board/Chairman, Environmental Public Hearing Committee (Deputy Commissioner, Hassan District). Interested public can participate in the Public Hearing at the above place. For details, please visit our **website: https://kspcb.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/-
Member Secretary

Our motto is to minimize waste generation through judicious use of natural resources

Alaknanda: Indian astronomers spot implausibly old spiral galaxy

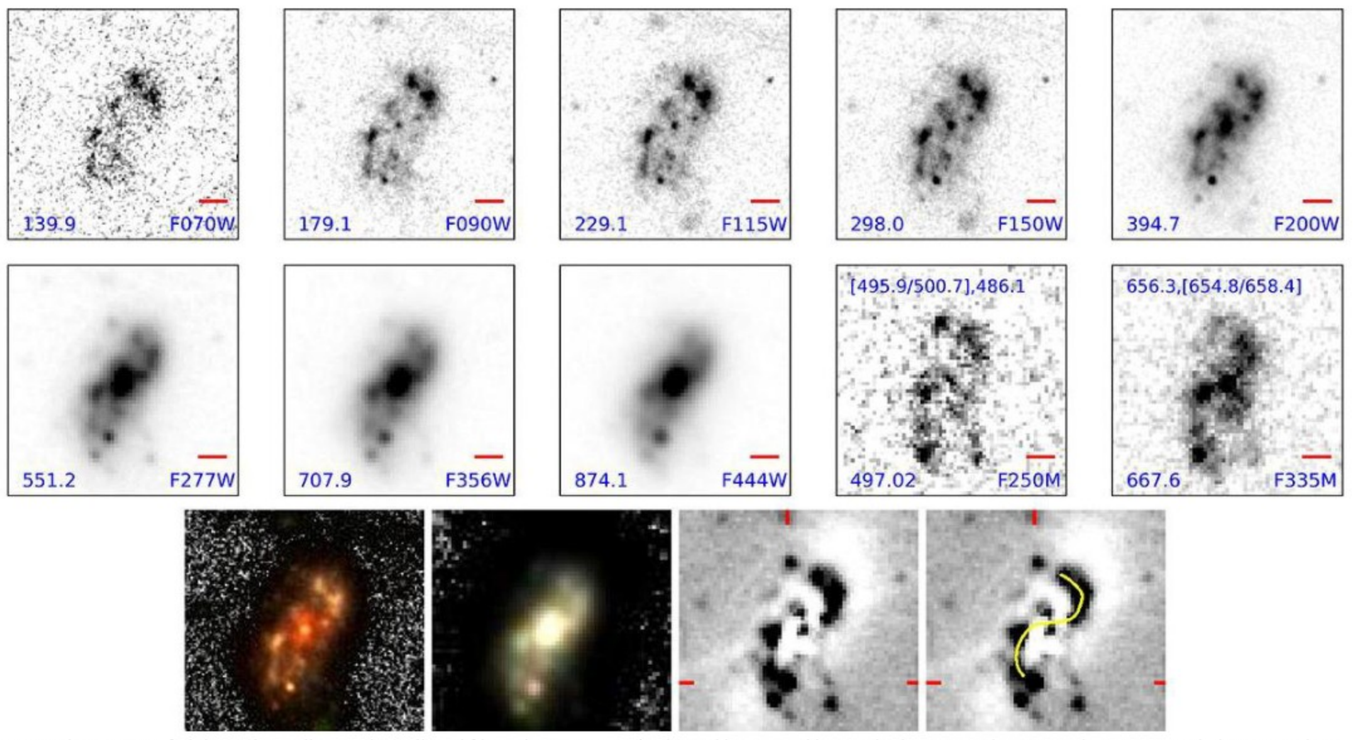
Alaknanda's existence poses a significant puzzle for astronomers: it took shape when the universe was only about 1.5 billion years old, defying current models of galaxy formation; according to one expert, either the galaxy grew steadily by drawing in cold gas or it interacted or merged with a smaller companion galaxy

Shreejaya Karantha

Astronomers from India have discovered the second farthest spiral galaxy in the depths of the universe, using the powerful James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), and have named it Alaknanda.

The galaxy was an unexpected sight during a broader study of galaxy shapes in the early universe. The findings were published in *Astronomy & Astrophysics* in November.

The study's lead author Rashi Jain, a PhD student at the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics in Pune, was analysing public JWST data from the UNCOVER survey, which contains about 70,000 objects, to understand the morphologies of galaxies in the early universe. That's when she stumbled on the galaxy with two perfectly symmetrical spiral arms. The first question that popped into her mind was: "Should this exist so early in the universe?"



Greyscale cutouts of Alaknanda in all JWST broadband filters (top two rows). The red horizontal bar in the bottom right corner shows a 6,500-lightyear scale at the galaxy's redshift. The bottom row shows two composite images of the galaxy; the last two images show an algorithm's fitting of the telescope data. A&A, 703 (2025) A96

'Meticulous analysis'

Ms. Jain and her doctoral advisor Yogesh Wadadekar undertook a detailed study to determine the galaxy's nature. They found it had a prominent disk with two clear spiral arms and a small central bulge. When they removed the smooth light from the disk and the bulge, the spiral arms remained visible, confirming they were real and not an artifact in the light data.

They also found that new stars formed along the spiral arms at about equivalent of 60 stars of our sun's mass every year. This confirmed Alaknanda was a fully developed spiral galaxy, and only 1.5 billion years after the Big Bang.

Ms. Jain named the galaxy Alaknanda for the river in Uttarakhand. She was looking for a female name to be consistent with how galaxies are often referred to in Indian languages.

"I remembered seeing Alaknanda and Mandakini, both tributaries of the Ganga, flowing together during my visit to Uttarakhand. Since our own Milky Way is called Mandakini in Hindi and is also a spiral galaxy, I named this one Alaknanda," she said.

"The discovery is serendipitous and the result reflects the power of JWST-quality data and meticulous analysis," Girish Kulkarni, a professor at the Department of Theoretical Physics at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai, said. "It's not so much a brand-new technique as careful work making the most of the observations."

Prof. Kulkarni wasn't involved in the study.

Too soon, too ready

Alaknanda's existence poses a significant puzzle for astronomers.

"Current models suggest it takes billions of years for the stable, rotating disks necessary for spiral arms to form," said Ms. Jain.

However, Alaknanda took shape when the universe was only about 1.5 billion years old, defying the current models of galaxy formation.

According to Prof. Kulkarni, understanding galaxy formation is a "complex system problem," akin to predicting the weather or the climate. Unlike "simple" physics problems, where fundamental principles might be unknown, complex problems involve known principles but have too many interacting parts to be modelled perfectly.

"Current simulations don't yield spiral galaxies with this degree of structure at z ~ 4, and when observations disagree with simulations, it usually tells us which ingredients need refinement," Prof. Kulkarni said. This means any mismatch is scientifically more useful rather than troubling.

('z ~ 4' is a reference to the redshift, which is the stretching of light to longer wavelengths as the light source recedes from the observer, in this case the earth. The 'z' measures the fractional increase in wavelength.)

So how did Alaknanda manage to form a mature spiral disk in such a short time?

According to Ms. Jain, there are two theories about the formation of spiral arms. One is that the galaxy grew steadily by drawing in cold gas, allowing it to settle into a stable, rotating disk in which density waves could form and sustain the spiral patterns. The other is that Alaknanda interacted or merged with a smaller companion galaxy, causing the arms to form. Even so, astronomers believe spiral arms would have needed more time to form in such a young universe.

> The discovery is serendipitous and the result reflects the power of JWST-quality data and meticulous analysis
>
> **GIRISH KULKARNI**
> TATA INSTITUTE OF FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH, MUMBAI

"There could be some factor accelerating this process," Ms. Jain said.

'Robust findings'

Astronomers usually study galaxies in the distant universe using the energies of light they emit, which reveal the chemical composition and physical conditions in the galaxy. In the absence of such data, as in the new study, they measure the galaxy's brightness at different wavelengths to reconstruct its overall energy distribution. This is called photometric analysis. Jain *et al*. did this using data from the JWST. And with the reconstructed spectrum, they were able to estimate its redshift, stellar mass, and star-formation history.

Prof. Kulkarni said that while the study relied on photometric analysis, its findings appear robust as the team carried out three independent and consistent redshift measurements. However, he suggested the researchers also examine detailed spectroscopic data, such as JWST's Integral Field Unit images, to ensure the observed structure is not caused by clumpy features and to confirm Alaknanda is truly spiral rather than a chance alignment.

The current observations are also insufficient to determine which of the two plausible mechanisms is responsible for Alaknanda's arms. To this end the team plans to propose further observations with JWST or with the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array in Chile.

Indian astronomy

Finally, the discovery of Alaknanda is also a significant achievement for Indian science. Prof. Kulkarni said India's presence in major JWST discoveries has been limited by a smaller astronomy workforce, fewer dedicated training programmes, and lower funding compared to that in the bigger research economies, as well as less sustained participation in large international survey collaborations.

To catch up, the Indian astronomy community is pursuing a two-pronged strategy: to build domestic facilities, like the proposed 10-metre optical telescope in Hanle, to train the next generation of scientists, and to join large, multinational projects like the Square Kilometer Array (SKA) and LIGO, which can guarantee access to world-class instruments.

(Shreejaya Karantha is a freelance science writer. shreejayakaranth@gmail.com)

THE GIST

Researchers at the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics in Pune stumbled on the galaxy with two perfectly symmetrical spiral arms while analysing public JWST data from the UNCOVER survey to understand the morphologies of galaxies in the early universe

Galaxy formation is a complex system problem, akin to predicting the weather or the climate. Unlike physics problems, where fundamental principles might be unknown, complex problems involve known principles but have too many interacting parts to be modelled perfectly

Researchers have been advised to examine spectroscopic data to ensure there are no clumpy features. Also, since observations are insufficient to support the two plausible mechanisms, the team plans to propose further studies with the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array in Chile

BIG SHOT

A dead bird lies covered in sunflower oil following a spill at a port terminal in Odesa, Ukraine, that was hit by recent Russian missile and drone attacks. REUTERS

WHAT IS IT?

Frequency comb: colour reference

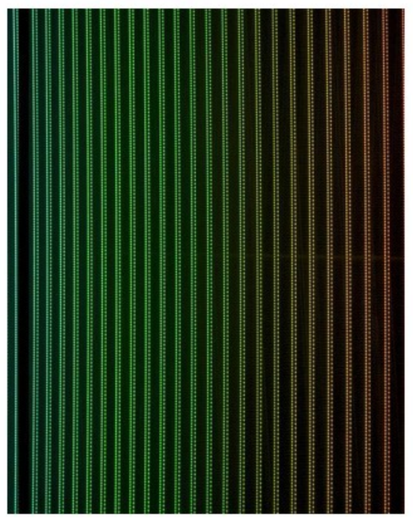
Vasudevan Mukunth

A frequency comb is a special kind of laser light whose spectrum, or set of frequencies, resembles the teeth of a comb. Instead of containing just one colour (one frequency), it emits a large number of evenly spaced frequencies. The spacing is extremely regular.

One way to make a frequency comb is using a mode-locked laser that emits very short pulses of light, repeating again and again at a steady rate.

A frequency comb is useful because it lets scientists compare an unknown light frequency to a stable reference with extraordinary precision. Say you have some mystery light, e.g. light produced by a new laser that you have built, and you need to find out its exact frequency. You can shine the new laser light and light from a frequency comb on a common light sensor.

The sensor will produce an electrical signal. If one comb tooth is very close in colour to your unknown laser, the two light waves don't line up perfectly. Sometimes their peaks line up, so the sensor signal gets stronger; sometimes they don't and the signal gets weaker. You can thus figure out what colour your laser is producing by combining the frequency (or tooth) it's closest to with how much it is off by. The sensor signal will reveal both these details.



Spectrum of light from a frequency comb installed on the High Accuracy Radial Velocity Planet Searcher, Chile. ESO

Frequency combs are an important modern tool to calibrate atomic clocks and measure shifts in light caused by gravity, among various other applications.

For feedback and suggestions
for 'Science', please write to
science@thehindu.co.in
with the subject 'Daily page'

37% of lakes across State encroached upon: GIS survey

District-wise break up shows Bengaluru Urban, Bengaluru Rural, and Bengaluru South districts topping the list, while Yadgir, Kalaburagi, and Udupi districts have performed the best

K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj
BENGALURU

The ongoing drone-powered GIS-survey and mapping of all lakes in the State is almost complete. As per latest data presented in the recently concluded Karnataka Legislature session, 37% of the lakes in the State are encroached.

District-wise break up shows Bengaluru Urban (88% of lakes encroached), Bengaluru Rural (90%), and Bengaluru South (57%) districts topping the list. Yadgir, Kalaburagi, and Udupi districts have performed the best. Mysuru, Mandya, Tumakuru, Davangere, Ballari, and Chikkamagaluru districts have almost half of their lakes encroached.

The Department of Survey Settlement and Land Records has identified 41,849 lakes spread over 7.78 lakh acres. Of this, survey of 41,225 lakes is complete, and the remaining 624 lakes in Kolar and Hassan districts are yet to be surveyed. Of the 41,225 lakes surveyed, 15,048 lakes are encroached upon. The extent of encroachment identified is 45,046 acres 33 guntas.

A view of Varthur lake in Bengaluru. SUDHAKARA JAIN

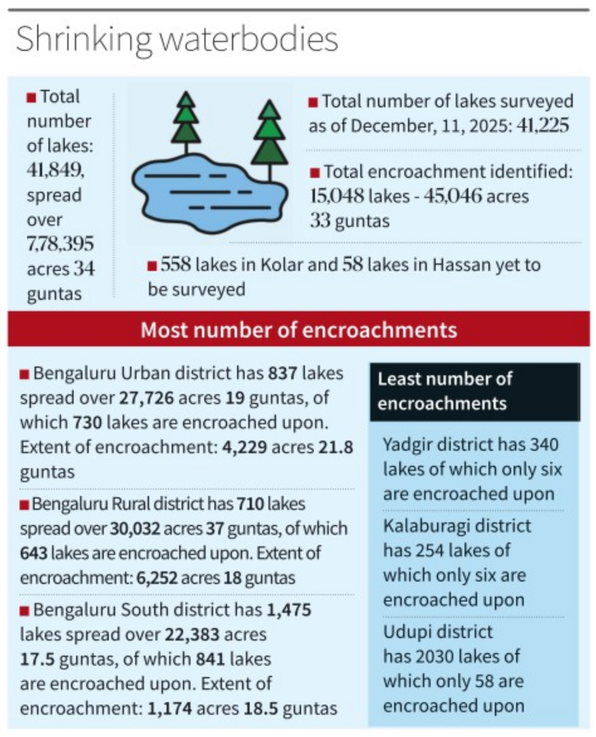
The survey has also created the first of its kind centralised database of all lakes

Survey and database

J. Manjunath, Commissioner, Department of Survey Settlement and Land Records, said the accuracy of the survey that used satellite images, drones, and on ground survey was accurate to 5 cm. "An on ground survey is conducted using rovers, which is then superimposed on digitised revenue maps which have the traditional akarband, using a drone survey. This will give us one of the most accurate status of the lake today," he said.

This survey has also created the first of its kind centralised database of all lakes. "Since multiple agencies are custodians of these lakes, there was no data on lakes available at one place. The survey has created the first centralised database of all lakes in the State," Mr. Manjunath said.

Bengaluru Urban and Rural districts have most of their lakes encroached upon. "We often say that no lake in Bengaluru City is spared from encroachment . So, it is heartening to see 107 lakes in the Bengaluru Urban district to not have any encroachments. Some of these may be those that have been recently rejuvenated as well," said V. Ramprasad, Friends of Lakes. However, he observed that most of the lakes, 90% of them, being encroached in Bengaluru Rural district was shocking.


Shrinking waterbodies
Total number of lakes: 41,849, spread over 7,78,395 acres 34 guntas
Total number of lakes surveyed as of December, 11, 2025: 41,225
Total encroachment identified: 15,048 lakes - 45,046 acres 33 guntas
558 lakes in Kolar and 58 lakes in Hassan yet to be surveyed
Most number of encroachments
Bengaluru Urban district has 837 lakes spread over 27,726 acres 19 guntas, of which 730 lakes are encroached upon. Extent of encroachment: 4,229 acres 21.8 guntas
Bengaluru Rural district has 710 lakes spread over 30,032 acres 37 guntas, of which 643 lakes are encroached upon. Extent of encroachment: 6,252 acres 18 guntas
Bengaluru South district has 1,475 lakes spread over 22,383 acres 17.5 guntas, of which 841 lakes are encroached upon. Extent of encroachment: 1,174 acres 18.5 guntas
Least number of encroachments
Yadgir district has 340 lakes of which only six are encroached upon
Kalaburagi district has 254 lakes of which only six are encroached upon
Udupi district has 2030 lakes of which only 58 are encroached upon

Serious threat

"As urbanised Bengaluru is spreading horizontally beyond the city, lakes in Bengaluru Rural and South districts are also under serious threat, this shows," he said. In fact, the extent of encroachment of lakes is much higher in Bengaluru Rural district than in Bengaluru Urban district. There are 837 lakes spread over 27,726 acres 19 guntas in Bengaluru Urban district, 730 of them are encroached upon and the extent of encroachment is found to be 4,229 acres 21.8 guntas (15.25%). On the other hand, there are 710 lakes spread over 30,032 acres 37 guntas, in Bengaluru Rural district, 643 of them are encroached and the extent of encroachment is found to be 6,252 acres 18 guntas (20.8%).

Bengaluru South district is not far behind. While 57% of the district's lakes have some encroachment, the extent is limited to 5.24%.

However, Friends of Lakes, a coalition of lake conservation activists and volunteers, has welcomed the centralised database of the ground situation of the lakes as the need of the hour. "The government must put all data, including maps of all the lakes in the public domain, so that the civil society can hold the authorities and the encroachers accountable," Mr. Ramprasad said.

Clearance

Responding to a question raised by MLC M. Nagaraju, Minister for Minor Irrigation N.S. Boseraju said that as per a 2012 High Court order, there was an apex committee formed at the State level under the leadership of Principal Secretary, Revenue Department, to guide custodians of lakes with its rejuvenation, conservation, encroachment clearance, and upkeep. Likewise, in each district Deputy Commissioner leads a similar committee, who is tasked with encroachment clearance, he said.

All custodian departments who clear encroachments of lakes have been asked to update the same in a particular format so that the centralised database is also updated automatically, sources said.

Pedestrian knocked down by luxury car, dies

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 26-year-old pedestrian was killed after being hit by a speeding luxury car allegedly driven rashly by a student in HSR Layout in the early hours of Saturday.

The incident occurred around 1 a.m. on 27th Cross Road in HSR Layout. The victim, identified as Santosh Doddagoudar, a native of Bailhongal in Belagavi district, was working as a delivery executive in Bengaluru. Police said Santosh had dinner at an eatery and was walking along the road when the car, driven at high speed by Abdul Rehman, knocked him down, before crashing into several parked vehicles, causing extensive damage.

Santosh died on the spot. The HSR Layout Traffic Police have registered a case. The accused was arrested and remanded in judicial custody.

Trader held for sexually exploiting woman

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 28-year-old cloth shop owner has been arrested for allegedly sexually exploiting a woman under the false promise of marriage and cheating her of over ₹20 lakh and 200 gm of gold ornaments.

A Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act case has also been registered against him for allegedly sexually abusing the victim's minor sister.

The accused has been identified as Shubhanshu Shukla, a native of Haryana, who has been living in Bengaluru for the past four years. He was residing in a rented house, while his wife continues to live in their hometown, police said. According to the police, Shukla lived in the same locality as the victim. He allegedly first befriended the victim's minor sister and sexually abused her. He later developed a relationship with the victim, a 26-year-old woman, and the two entered into a live-in relationship.

During this period, Shukla allegedly sexually exploited the woman under the false promise of marriage. Police said that he repeatedly took money from the victim, collecting more than ₹20 lakh, along with 200 gm of gold ornaments.

When the woman later discovered that Shukla was already married and confronted him, he allegedly promised to obtain a divorce and continued to extract money from her, police added.

Based on the woman's complaint, a case was registered and Shukla was arrested last week.

UDD approves OTS for pending water bills, likely to start from Jan. first week

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Urban Development Department (UDD) has on December 23 approved a One Time Settlement (OTS) scheme for pending water bills in Bengaluru.

The State Cabinet had approved a proposal for the same on November 27. The scheme will likely open in the first week of January and the window will be open for three months, V. Ram Prasath Manohar, Chairman, Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), said.

BWSSB has an arrears of ₹701 crore, of which ₹439 crore is the principal and the rest ₹262 crore has accumulated as interest and penalty. Under the OTS scheme, those who clear the outstanding principal amount in a single instalment will have their interest and penalty waived. "There will be no room for any middlemen. Customers can directly register themselves on the official BWSSB website. Additionally, a dedicated mobile app is being developed for this purpose. Once registered, customers will be intimated about the payment window and the deadline," Mr. Manohar said. "The waiver process is automated. As soon as the customer pays the principal amount, the software at the back-end will automatically waive the accumulated interest and penalty charges. Once the software is ready, we will launch the scheme, most likely in the first week of January," he added.

Ram Prasath Manohar

A similar OTS for pending water bills was implemented in Hyderabad successfully twice, and the BWSSB has adopted a similar scheme, sources said.

The BWSSB has drawn up a proactive approach to reach defaulters. "Special teams from BWSSB will personally visit government buildings and commercial complexes to facilitate the settlement. For residential buildings, local officials will reach out to consumers," Mr. Manohar said.

ISRO invites student community to take part in robotic challenge

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Here is an opportunity for the student community to contribute to future Indian space programmes including ISRO's future goal to explore the Martian surface.

ISRO has announced the ISRO Robotics Challenge - URSC (IRoC-U 2026) which challenges the students to develop "Towards Swarm Expedition: Autonomous Surveyor Challenge for Exploration, Navigation and Dynamics (ASCEND)" without any external navigation aids like GNSS, pseudolite or reflector arrays.

The ISRO said that one of its future goals is the exploration of Martian surface and as a part of the Martian surface exploration, an Autonomous Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) will carry out scientific activities. "The ISRO solicits from the youth of India innovative ideas and designs in the area of navigation for future missions through the conduct of Robotics Challenge," it said.

According to the space agency, the IRoC-U 2026 challenge will involve autonomous navigation, landing, power transfer, and image data validation. "Autonomous aerial swarms are the future of planetary exploration: they can deploy, survey, recharge and share data without direct human control. The ASCEND takes the first step toward this vision," the ISRO said.

In this challenge, teams will build a micro-UAV (aerial vehicle) and a base station. "The UAV departs from its base station, acquires the target characteristics it needs to identify, searches a designated area for those features, then returns to base station, transfer its data, and recharge- all without GPS, telemetry or remote piloting," it added.

The current challenge focuses on developing and demonstrating navigation and guidance techniques rather than building aerial vehicles. The ISRO said students can use/develop any available (off-the-shelf) aerial vehicle complying with the existing rules of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation. The space agency has conducted the IRoC-U 2024 and 2025 as well and winners and runners-up are not eligible to participate in the IRoC-U 2026.

Last date for registration and submission of the complete proposal for the preliminary round is January 12, 2026.

For over a decade, octogenarian spending his retirement days taking free tuition for slum children

Rishita Khanna
BENGALURU

Every day between 4 p.m. and 6.30 p.m., since 2013, a home in J.P. Nagar turns into a classroom where small batches of students learn English, mathematics, and science lessons. These classes have helped many of them join college and make careers across various fields.

For more than 12 years now, an 82-year-old man in Bengaluru has been spending his evenings teaching children who cannot afford private schooling, let alone tuitions.

C.S. Narayanan teaching children who cannot afford private tuitions, in Bengaluru. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Move to Bengaluru

This began after C.S. Narayanan moved to Bengaluru from Chennai. During one of his regular evening walks around Puttanahalli lake with his wife Kamala, Mr. Narayanan met Usha Rajagopalan of the Puttanahalli Lake Trust. She spoke to him about children from the slums around the lake who were dropping out of school and asked if he could help teach them. This marked the beginning of what he describes as the most rewarding journey of his life.

Mr. Narayanan had retired and returned to India after a long career in the U.S., where he worked in oncology departments. He was looking to volunteer at a cancer hospital when he agreed to help the children. Despite not knowing Kannada, he returned to the lake the next day with Kannada-English dictionaries and began teaching basic spellings, reading, and mathematics.

Initially, only a handful of children came. "Lessons were worked out word by word through the dictionary... The numbers slowly grew from six to eight, and then to more than 20, making it difficult to give each child individual attention," he said.

That was when he decided to move the classes to his home. "I limited each batch to around 15 students and made it clear that I would only teach children whose families could not afford paid tuition elsewhere. Over time, the number settled into smaller groups of about eight, making it possible to track each child's progress," he said.

The children came from different schools and grades, with many following the State syllabus. As expenses mounted on textbooks, uniforms and examination fees, Mr. Narayanan began reaching out to NGOs and individuals for support. In some cases, organisations stepped in to sponsor students fully. In others, parents contributed small amounts so they were not entirely dependent on him.

Among his earliest students were the children of his domestic worker. Both are now employed in software companies. Over the years, several others have gone on to study engineering, joined the armed forces or got employed in the IT sector. Since he began teaching in 2013, Mr. Narayanan, who has raised over ₹30 lakh now, said there has not been a single instance of a student dropping out due to lack of funds.

Even visits to his own children, who live in the U.S., are planned around the school calendar here. Laughing, he said his children tease him that he spends time with them according to the convenience of his students. He said he prefers to travel only during breaks, worried that long gaps might disrupt the children's routine. "If they lose interest, it's hard to bring them back," he said. Once a year, he also takes the children out, which he believes is, for many of them, their only outing outside their neighbourhood.

Pooja, one of his first students and the daughter of his domestic help, recalled struggling in school, especially with English, and she was on the verge of dropping out. She joined Mr.Narayanan's classes scoring single-digit marks. With steady help, she said, things slowly changed. Her 'tuition uncle' later helped her move to a different school and encouraged her to continue studying.

She went on to complete her BCA and MCA and now works with a software company.

Timings
BENGALURU

MONDAY, DEC. 29	
RISE 06:40	SET 18:03
RISE 13:12	SET 01:10
TUESDAY, DEC. 30	
RISE 06:41	SET 18:03
RISE 13:59	SET 02:07
WEDNESDAY, DEC. 31	
RISE 06:41	SET 18:04
RISE 14:53	SET 03:09

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	29	20
Mysuru	28	13
Bengaluru	26	16

Bengaluru Today
27°C The weather will be dry. Day will be comfortable. Night will be cool and hazy.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
26°C Morning will be cool with mist and haze. Day will be comfortable. Night also will be cool. Dry weather to occur.

© Copyright Skymet Weather 2025
All rights reserved.

THE HINDU
DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate enquiries to satisfy themselves about the veracity of an advertisement before responding to any published in this newspaper. THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD., the Publisher & Owner of this newspaper, does not vouch for the authenticity of any advertisement or advertiser or for any of the advertiser's products and/or services. In no event can the Owner, Publisher, Printer, Editor, Director/s, Employees of this newspaper/company be held responsible/liable in any manner whatsoever for any claims and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.

Published by Nirmala Lakshman at No 19&21, Bhagwan Mahaveer Road, Bengaluru-560001 and Printed by C. Sridhar at Plot No. 13-D, Bommasandra-Jigani Link Road, KIADB Industrial Area, Bommasandra, Anekal Taluk, Bengaluru-560099 on behalf of THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD., Chennai-600002. Editor: Suresh Nambath (Responsible for selection of news under the PRP Act).
ISSN 0971 - 751X

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

People displaced in Sudan in the last three days

10,000 Violence in Western and Southern Sudan displaced more than 10,000 people within a three-day period this week, according to figures released by the United Nations' migration agency on Sunday. AFP

Decline in private equity investments in India's real estate

29 In per cent. Private equity investments in real estate fell 29% this year to $3.46 billion due to lower inflow of funds in housing and warehousing projects, according to Knight Frank India. Private equity (PE) investments stood at $4.9 billion during the preceding year. PTI

Britain's joint procurement contract with Germany

70 In $ million. Britain said on Sunday it signed a 52-million-pound ($70 million) joint procurement contract with Germany to acquire advanced artillery mounted on armoured vehicles that can fire while moving and hit targets more than 70 km (44 miles) away. REUTERS

Number of wagons of a goods train derailed in Bihar's Jamui

8 Eight wagons of a goods train have derailed in Bihar's Jamui district, causing disruption of railway services on the Howrah-Patna-Delhi route, officials said. No casualties have been reported so far, they said. The accident took place between Lahabon and Simultala railway station. PTI

Adani Group's investment in defence next year

1.8 In ₹ lakh crore. Adani Group plans to invest ₹1.8 lakh crore in defence manufacturing, with a focus on strengthening capabilities in unmanned and autonomous systems as well as advanced guided weapons, sources said. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

Follow us facebook.com/thehindu X.com/the_hindu instagram.com/the_hindu

Gaps in regulating digital campaigns

An analysis of digital political advertisements during the Bihar Assembly election shows that third-party actors outspend official parties and candidates and achieve far greater visibility; this creates an accountability gap, allowing opaque funding and influence to persist beyond regulatory oversight

LETTER & SPIRIT

Abhishek Sharma
Vandita Gupta

India's election rulebook is governing a campaign ecosystem that no longer runs only on parties and candidates. As political persuasion shifts to platforms and intermediaries, regulation is struggling to keep pace with how votes are actually influenced. This disjunction surfaced in the Election Commission's (EC) press note of October 14 on the Bihar Assembly elections, which mandated pre-certification of political advertisements by the Media Certification and Monitoring Committee (MCMC) and reiterated the requirement under Section 77(1) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, that political parties disclose social media campaign expenditure.

Limited lens

What unites these directives is their point of address. They remain focused on parties and candidates, even as electoral outreach is increasingly mediated by third-party actors such as campaign firms, influencers, and interest groups operating outside formal regulatory structures.

A subsequent notification issued by the EC on October 21 sought to widen the regulatory net by requiring that no political party, candidate, organisation, or individual publish political advertisements in the print media on polling day or the preceding day without prior MCMC certification. While this acknowledged the changing campaign environment by including entities other than parties or candidates, it also exposed the limits of the Commission's regulatory imagination. The restriction applies only to a narrow pre-poll window and remains confined to print media, even as electoral influence has decisively migrated to digital platforms.

Read together, these advisories foreground two unresolved questions: time, in an era where digital campaigns peak well before polling, and stakeholders, in a system shaped by actors beyond those formally regulated.

This analysis uses the Bihar Assembly election as a case study. Using Meta's Ads Library, it examines digital political advertisements by advertisers spending over one lakh in Bihar during the 30 days ending on November 10, the day before the final phase of polling, distinguishing between official party, candidate pages, and third-party actors.

Who pays, who persuades

An analysis of party expenditure reports, published by *The Hindu* on May 6, 2024, shows that digital campaigning now dominates election spending. What remains less visible is how this expenditure is distributed beyond parties and candidates, a gap that becomes evident from digital advertising data from the Bihar Assembly election.

On Meta, 55 campaigners spent more than ₹1 lakh on digital political advertisements nationally during the period under analysis. Of these, only 23 were official parties or candidates. The remaining 32 were third-party or surrogate campaigners.

In digital elections, reach is shaped as much by who speaks as by how much is spent. Third-party actors not only outspent parties and candidates but also achieved far greater visibility. Despite near-identical average spending, their campaigns generated almost twice the average impressions of official parties and candidates (Table 1).

Election outreach: BJP supporters celebrating after the party's victory in Patna on November 14. R. V. MOORTHY

THE GIST

- India's election rulebook governs a campaign ecosystem that no longer runs only on parties and candidates, as political persuasion shifts to platforms and intermediaries operating outside formal regulatory structures.
- Digital advertising data from the Bihar Assembly elections shows that third-party actors outspend official parties and candidates and operate with higher campaign efficiency.
- The absence of regulatory obligations for these actors creates an accountability gap, allowing opaque financial entanglements and unaccounted influence to persist.

Table 1: Summary of digital advertising during the Bihar election on Meta

Stakeholders	Number	Total spend	Total impressions	Average spend	Average impressions
Parties/Candidates	23	₹5.55 crore	85.93 crore	₹24.16 lakh	3.74 crore
Third-parties	32	₹8.08 crore	210.84 crore	₹25.25 lakh	6.59 crore

Table 2: Age-wise consumption of political advertisements

Stakeholders	13-24	25-34	35-44	Above 44
Parties/Candidates	40.3%	36.1%	13.3%	10.2%
Third-parties	36.8%	37.7%	14.8%	10.6%

Table 3: Campaign efficiency of political advertisements

Stakeholders	Impressions per ₹10 lakh
Parties/Candidates	1.54 crore
Third-parties	2.60 crore

A clearer asymmetry between official, unofficial campaigning emerges when the efficiency is examined; it shows that in digital campaigns, comparable spending produces unequal circulation, raising questions about where communicative power in online elections actually resides

Nearly three-fourths of all digital outreach by parties and candidates (76.4%), as well as by third-party actors (74.5%), is consumed by individuals aged 13-34. However, the age-wise distribution of consumption diverges. Party and candidate advertisements remain sharply concentrated among the 13-24 and 25-34 age cohorts, while third-party advertisements show a more dispersed pattern, generating relatively higher impressions among those aged 25-44 and retaining a comparable presence beyond the age of 44 (Table 2).

A clearer asymmetry between official and unofficial campaigning emerges when campaign efficiency is examined. Measured as impressions per ₹10 lakh spent, third-party advertisers are markedly more cost-efficient, generating an average of 2.60 crore impressions compared to 1.54 crore for party or candidate pages (Table 3). This shows that in digital campaigns, comparable spending produces unequal circulation, raising questions about where communicative power in online elections actually resides.

An unaccountable nexus

Beyond differences in reach and efficiency, the analysis reveals direct financial entanglements between political parties and third-party actors. In some cases, advertisements on official party pages were funded by external entities. For instance, advertisements on the official Meta page of the Janata Dal (United) were sponsored by an entity identified as "The Spectrum".

This raises a deeper concern. Expenditure incurred by third-party entities to sponsor advertisements on official party pages may not be reflected in the expenditure statements submitted to the EC, risking an understatement of the true financial footprint of digital campaigning. More importantly, this pattern challenges the assumption that influence flows only from parties to third-party campaigners. Instead, it points to a dual-directional relationship in which third-party actors not only amplify political messaging but also directly finance it on official platforms, blurring the line between authorised expenditure and unaccounted influence.

Accountability gap

In *Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting v. M/s Gemini TV* (2004), the Supreme Court held that no individual or entity may publish advertisements for the benefit of any political party or candidate. By the same logic, advertisements directed against a party or candidate are equally impermissible, as such messaging inevitably benefits electoral competitors. Yet the guidelines issued by the EC ahead of the Bihar Assembly elections fall short of applying this standard to third-party actors, many of whom continued campaigning even on the evening of polling and on polling day itself.

Addressing this gap requires a recalibration of how electoral stakeholders are understood. Political campaigns are no longer confined to parties and candidates alone, but are shaped by a wider ecosystem of actors involved in content dissemination and campaign finance.

Unless regulatory obligations are extended – both in substance and scope – beyond parties and candidates, space will continue to exist for opaque, bi-directional arrangements that escape scrutiny.

The problem is compounded in the context of campaign finance. While parties are legally required to submit expenditure statements to the EC, digital spending is often disclosed ambiguously, with payments listed under platform names such as 'Facebook' rather than the specific entities that design or fund advertisements. More troubling still is the reverse flow of funding, where third-party entities pay for advertisements on the official page of a political party. Parties are required to report what they spend; they are not required to disclose what others spend on their behalf. This inversion poses an equal, if not greater, threat to the principles of transparency and fairness, allowing political influence to remain formally invisible.

Delayed regulation

Finally, the temporal framing of regulation remains inadequate. Electoral influence now builds over months through sustained digital exposure, rendering rules that activate only on the eve of polling ineffective against harms already set in motion. Each election conducted without a framework attuned to this reality carries clear costs in terms of the gradual erosion of trust in a fair digital democracy. The challenge now is no longer one of recognition, but of resolve.

Abhishek Sharma is a Senior Political and Policy Researcher. Vandita Gupta is an independent researcher

Depression screening at primary care level can yield major health gains: Study

It examines the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of integrating population-based depression screening into India's comprehensive primary healthcare system

Afshan Yasmeen
BENGALURU

Universal screening for depression at the primary healthcare level could result in significant public health benefits and economic savings for India, according to a new modelling study published in The Lancet Regional Health - Southeast Asia.

The study examined the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of integrating population-based depression screening into India's comprehensive primary healthcare system, in line with the Centre's proposal to introduce routine screening at Ayushman Arogya Mandirs.

Conducted jointly by researchers from the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, NIMHANS in Bengaluru, and the National Health Systems Resource Centre, the study was funded by the Union Department of Health Research.

The researchers compared universal screening of adults aged 30 and above and an expanded option covering those aged 20 and above with the current practice of diagnosing only symptomatic individuals. The analysis found that a two-step assessment

The study examined the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of integrating population-based depression screening into India's comprehensive primary healthcare system.

From a societal perspective, the programme is projected to generate savings of ₹291 billion to ₹482 billion

approach using depression screening tools (PHQ-2 and PHQ-9) could reduce the annual prevalence of depression by 2.4% and incidence by 5.1% among adults aged 30 and above. Screening individuals aged 20 and above was associated with greater health gains and improved cost-effectiveness.

Girish N. Rao, professor of Epidemiology at NIMHANS and one of the authors, said this was the first such study in India to quantify the economic and health impact of depression screening using modelling techniques. "Until now, discussions around depression have largely been qualitative. This study demonstrates that the tools to address depression already exist and shows how they can be systematically applied within the healthcare system," he told *The Hindu*.

Social, economic losses

Dr. Rao said depression contributes significantly to social and economic losses, including suicide risk. "Nearly half of suicide risk is linked to mental health disorders, particularly depression. Untreated depression also worsens outcomes in chronic conditions such as diabetes, where adherence to medication and lifestyle advice is often poor," he said. He underscored the importance of integrating mental health screening into routine care. "Most patients first present at primary healthcare facilities. Screening for depression whenever individuals seek care would be more effective than waiting for severe symptoms to develop," he said.

The study drew up data from multiple national sources, including the National Mental Health Survey and the National Sample Survey, along with quality-of-life data, to model outcomes under routine care versus systematic screening.

The findings show that gains in quality-adjusted life years (QALYs) per person ranged from 0.0273 to 0.0295, while the intervention could avert between 12,826 and 18,340 deaths over a lifetime horizon.

From a societal perspective, the programme is projected to generate savings of ₹291 billion to ₹482 billion - equivalent to 0.19% to 0.32% of India's GDP - largely due to reduced productivity losses. Both screening strategies were found to be cost-effective.

The study also found that the programme becomes cost-saving from the health system's perspective if at least 60% of patients identified through screening seek care in public health facilities.

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar speaking at the Congress Foundation Day celebrations in Bengaluru on Sunday. PTI

Congress invites applications for GBA polls

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Deputy Chief Minister and Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president D.K. Shivakumar on Sunday announced that the party would release applications for the prospective Congress candidates to apply and contest the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) elections.

The applications will cost ₹50,000 for general category candidates and ₹25,000 for candidates from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities. After a demand came to reduce the application fee for women, Mr. Shivakumar scaled down the fee from ₹50,000 to ₹25,000 for them. The collected money will go towards the building construction fund, he said, adding that the Congress would be incurring ₹20 crore for building Congress Bhavans in districts and ₹60 crore for the State office.

He set the deadline for submitting application to January 15.

"It is not possible to win the election if you think that poll preparation can be undertaken after the GBA elections are announced. However big a leader you are, D.K. Shivakumar will not identify you if you think that work can be started after election schedule is announced," Mr. Shivakumar said during the Congress Foundation Day celebrations here.

The KPCC president said that about ₹20 crore was collected through the application fee during the May 2023 elections. "This helped in placing advertisements on behalf of the party."

He said that at least 10 women should apply from each ward. "Those who have worked well at the booth level will get opportunities and not those who run behind Mr. Siddaramaiah or me."

The Congress is expecting that the elections to taluk and zilla panchayats could be held in the next two to three months after resolving the cases in courts over reservation, Mr. Shivakumar said. "I have instructed that even for the taluk and zilla panchayat elections, preparation should be started," he added.

From Page One

Machine learning to predict landslips in Western Ghats

The model compares current rainfall with earlier landslide-triggering events and filters out low-risk situations, reducing unnecessary alerts. Tests showed the method to be highly accurate.

If rainfall conditions appear risky, the second stage assesses soil stability using a modified version of the simplified Bishop method, which factors in soil moisture and suction based on unsaturated soil mechanics. Laboratory tests confirmed that slope stability decreases as soil absorbs more water.

The final stage monitors surface movement through image analysis using Particle Image Velocimetry (PIV). Sudden increases in ground movement were found to be reliable warning signs of an impending landslide, often before visible failure occurs.

According to the researchers, using all three indicators together makes the warning system far more reliable.

Researchers say the framework is particularly suited for hill roads, highways, railway cuttings, settlements located on steep slopes, and critical infrastructure corridors across the Western Ghats. Its adoption could improve disaster preparedness.

20,000 personnel to be deployed

Watch towers and 180 focus lights will be installed at vulnerable locations, while vehicle checks and access controls will be intensified.

To assist those unable to find taxis late at night, transport facilities will be provided at eight designated locations. Temporary CCTV cameras have been installed at 250 locations, along with safety shelters and ambulances. Police will also monitor crowds using drone surveillance.

Special focus has been placed on women's safety and crowd management. Bar and restaurant owners, malls and entertainment venue operators have been issued clear instructions, and the DGP has released guidelines. Security agencies are also on high alert from a terror threat perspective. AI-enabled facial recognition cameras will be deployed to identify individuals with criminal backgrounds and issue real-time alerts to police teams.

THE HINDU
EDUCATIONPLUS
GET THE EDGE Follow us facebook.com/thehindu twitter.com/the_hindu instagram.com/the_hindu

New ways of learning

An educationist considers some crucial differences between higher education institutes in India and the U.S.

A. Joseph Dorairaj

As an educationist who has visited dozens of higher education institutes in India and the U.S. and interacted with faculty and students, I have found major differences between Indian HEIs and their American counterparts.

Most American HEIs are international in character. No matter which department or discipline, there are faculty from different parts of the world and students of different races, complexions, world views, and sexual and ideological orientations. This leads to cultural plurality and promotes diverse viewpoints and debates, making teaching-learning dialogical and meaningful. In contrast, even top-ranking Indian institutions have hardly any international faculty. At the most, there are a couple of visiting professors who may spend a maximum of one semester teaching one or two courses. This extends to the student body as well, leading to an acute absence of cross-cultural discussions and debates.

Variety of activities

American campuses are buzzing with various activities: intellectual, cultural, political, sports and more. The Ivy League institutions are members of the Ivy League Athletic Conference, making them not only intellectually vibrant but also strong in terms of sporting activities. In contrast, Indian HEIs are committed primarily to academic pursuits.

While cultural and sporting facilities are available in some, Indian institutions have a long way to go before they reach American standards. Many campuses are deserted after regular class hours. As a result, students lack a holistic dimension.

The third aspect is the contrasting teaching styles. Indian classrooms are largely teacher-centred and rote-memorisation is the norm. But American institutions encourage debates and discussions, even dissent. Teachers are guides and catalysts. Critical thinking is the bedrock of teaching-learning with problem-solving being a key strategy. Technology has been seamlessly integrated in all institutions.

Indian institutions have made some successful attempts in integrating technology with teaching-learning but much more needs to be done. Universities and colleges in India have introduced the Choice-Based Credit System but this is plagued with issues. There is hardly any interdisciplinarity. Credit transfer too is a thorny issue though there have been attempts to iron these out. Indian HEIs have a lot to learn from their American counterparts regarding the credit system, which facilitates an individual pace of learning.

American institutions, including medical and technology institutes and community colleges, focus on liberal education, which claims that knowledge is an end in itself. But, in the Indian educational system, liberal education is being discounted and the future of the Humanities is uncertain. HEIs are being turned into skill development institutes.

Assessments

There is a crucial difference with regard to assessment though both systems talk of formative and summative assessments. The American system encourages self-study and personalised learning, and emphasises formative assessment. Evaluation is individualised to a reasonable extent. There is a conscious attempt to go beyond marks and grades. In India, given the large number of classes, evaluation is standardised.

American universities are centres of excellence, especially in terms of cutting-edge research. Many top journals in diverse disciplines are published in the U.S. and the American universities boast of publishing the highest number of papers in indexed journals. Indian universities are trying to catch up in terms of the number of publications but lack of research funding, plagiarism and retraction are key challenges.

Finally, a striking difference is the stark absence of political activism on campus. In recent times, some university presidents had the courage to speak truth to power. A sizeable percentage of students in American institutions are politically active, voicing their concern for the disempowered.

On the contrary, the faculty and the students in most Indian institutions are politically non-committal though student wings of major political parties are active on campuses. But the political activism in the American HEIs is issue-based while it is drawn on party lines in Indian HEIs.

In the realm of higher education, India has a lot to learn from the U.S., especially in terms of promoting liberal education, critical thinking, interdisciplinarity, individualised learning, and holistic and transformative education. In particular, Indian HEIs should realise that political activism is not an enemy of the academia, but a tool of empowerment. If India emulates some of the best American educational practices, it can improve its ranking and stature in the international area and empower its students.

Views are personal

The writer is Emeritus Professor, Gandhigram Rural Institute, Gandhigram, Tamil Nadu. Email josephdorairaj@gmail.com

SCHOLARSHIPS

Aspire Leaders Programme
An initiative from Aspire Institute
Eligibility: Students who are first-generation learners from limited-income households, between 18 and 29 years, and are enrolled in or have completed a UG degree
Rewards: Free access to training modules, live sessions by Harvard faculty, and more
Application: Online
Deadline: January 23
www.b4s.in/edge/ALPS2

John Willett International Scholarship
Offered by Griffith University, Australia
Eligibility: Open to Asian students with minimum 4.0 GPA on a seven-point scale who are enrolling in a full-time Master of Global Development at the Griffith Business School and meet all academic and English language requirements.
Rewards: 50% tuition fee waiver for up to two years.
Application: Online
Deadline: January 26
www.b4s.in/edge/GUJW1

Young India Fellowship
Offered by Ashoka University
Eligibility: Open to those holding a recognised UG degree or an equivalent in any discipline.
Rewards: Partial or fully-funded fellowship benefits.
Application: Online
Deadline: March 23, 2026
www.b4s.in/edge/TYIF1

Courtesy: Buddy4study.com

BUILDING BLOCKS

What are rare-earth elements and why is everyone looking for them?

Even when they are not very scarce in the earth's crust, they tend to be spread out in low concentrations and mixed together in the same minerals, so they are difficult to separate; however, countries worldwide are interested in acquiring them because they are crucial for many green technologies

Vasudevan Mukunth

Rare-earth elements are a set of metallic elements in the periodic table. Chemists usually refer to a group of 17 elements when they use this label: the 15 lanthanides from lanthanum to lutetium, and scandium and yttrium. In most classroom periodic tables, the lanthanides are shown as a separate row placed beneath the main periodic table. Scandium and yttrium lie in the main table, in Group 3, above and near the transition metals.

Even when they're not very scarce in the earth's crust, they tend to be spread out in low concentrations and mixed together with each other in the same minerals, so they're difficult and expensive to separate. However, countries worldwide are interested in acquiring them because they're crucial for high-performance magnets, specialised lighting and optics, catalysts, and other components that underpin many green technologies and electronics.

Rare-earth oxide powders are typically heavy and gritty; clockwise from top-centre: praseodymium, cerium, lanthanum, neodymium, samarium, and gadolinium. PUBLIC DOMAIN

History and technology

The rare-earth elements are scandium, yttrium, lanthanum, cerium, praseodymium, neodymium, prometheum, samarium, europium, gadolinium, terbium, dysprosium, holmium, erbium, thulium, ytterbium, and lutetium.

They're called 'rare earths' for historical reasons. "Earth" was an old chemistry term for oxide powders and many of these elements were first identified as oxides from which they couldn't be isolated easily.

However, people often use the term 'rare-earth' loosely, leading to confusion. Some use 'rare-earths' to mean only the lanthanides. Some others bundle rare-earths with 'strategic' or 'critical' elements such as lithium, cobalt, gallium, and germanium even though the latter aren't rare-earth elements.

Rare-earth elements show up in many contemporary technologies because of their useful electrical, magnetic and/or optical behaviour. One particularly important application is as permanent magnets.

Neodymium-iron-boron magnets, which are the world's most common magnet type involving a rare-earth element, are used in motors and generators.

Phosphors – substances that emit light when irradiated – also incorporate europium and terbium while dopants in lasers and optical devices (including in fibre optics) use neodymium and erbium. Rare-earth elements are also used in catalysts, glass and ceramics, polishing powders, and other specialised materials.

Magnetic chemistry

In permanent magnets, rare-earth atoms have electrons in the 4f shell that behave differently from the other electrons. The 4f electrons are relatively more localised, meaning they stay close to the nucleus, whereas the other electrons become 'smeared out' when they become part of bonds in a solid. As a result, the 4f electrons maintain a strong magnetic moment, i.e., they behave very faithfully like small magnets. An atom with multiple electrons like this also behaves more strongly like a magnet.

Every good permanent magnet needs to have two things: a large magnetisation, meaning many atomic magnetic moments can line up in the same direction to make a strong overall field; and stability, which means once the magnetic moments line up, they don't easily get knocked out of alignment by heat, vibrations or even an opposing magnetic field.

Rare-earth atoms have both. Their 4f electrons can carry relatively large magnetic moments, so they can contribute to strong magnetisation. And because these electrons are localised as well as closely align with the crystal's preferred direction (due to a property called magnetocrystalline anisotropy) they can 'pin' the magnetisation down. Motors and generators that use such magnets thus work efficiently even at high speeds and high temperatures.

Rare-elements are also good phosphors because they produce sharp, stable colours. The idea is to supply energy to such a phosphor at a frequency its 4f electrons are likely to absorb. When they do, the electrons get excited, then de-excited, reemitting the excess energy at a different (but fixed) frequency. We see this emission as light.

Because the 4f electrons sit relatively close to the nucleus, they're partly shielded from the surrounding solid by the outer electrons. So the exact energy levels of the 4f electrons aren't much affected by the crystal they're inside. The light the 4f electrons emit is also concentrated in a small slice of the visible spectrum instead of being a mix of colours.

Rare-earths v. oil

Rare-earth ore deposits that can be mined in an economically feasible way are usually found in a few pockets of rock and soil rather than being spread evenly. Companies start by looking for minerals that carry rare-earth elements in higher concentrations, such as bastnäsite and monazite, or for certain clay deposits in which rare-earth ions are loosely held on the surface of clay particles.

Many mines are open-pit since these minerals are usually dispersed through large volumes of rock and the ore has to be dug out, crushed, and moved in bulk. This is also where some of the environmental complications of rare-earth element value chains first appear: some minerals occur alongside thorium or uranium, so the waste rock needs to be handled carefully. Mines may also need copious amounts of water and specific chemicals to produce an initial concentrate.

This said, while both rare-earth elements and crude oil have to be extracted and processed before use, the processing step is significantly different – so much so that for rare-earth elements it has emerged as a strategic element.

A refinery uses physical separation plus some chemical reactions to refine crude. Fractional distillation, the main step, works because hydrocarbons' boiling points are spread out, so just heating and condensing the crude can separate its constituents efficiently at industrial scale.

On the other hand, rare-earth producers start with solids that contain many elements together, and they must be separated at very high purity for applications. The problem is that neighbouring rare-earth ions behave similarly in solution, so the corresponding separation process is voluminous and energy-intensive.

Second, a magnet maker doesn't want any or all rare-elements but a specific oxide or metal, of a minimum purity. If a separator is short on one element or can't deliver the required purity, the factory can't switch one element for another. In the oil industry, however, refineries can swap feedstocks and trade intermediates at scale.

Midstream menace

After mining, the first goal is to make a smaller, richer product. This begins with beneficiation: physically processing the ore to separate more valuable mineral grains from the less. Workers crush and grind the ore to free the grains, then use flotation, magnets or gravity to separately collect different concentrates. The resulting concentrate will still contain many rare-earth elements together, plus other unwanted elements.

Next is chemical cracking, where the producer breaks the rare-earth minerals apart using strong acids or bases or high temperature, converting them into a form that dissolves more easily.

Third is leaching. The cracked material is mixed with a liquid, often an acidic solution, so the rare-earth atoms move into the liquid as ions. Then the producer separates the liquid from the remaining solids; this liquid contains a mixture of all rare-earth ions dissolved together plus some impurities.

The hardest step is separating this mixture into individual rare-earth elements of high purity because these elements often have the same common charge (usually +3) and their ions are similar in size. In a simple chemical reaction, then, the ions behave in roughly the same way.

Industry thus uses a technique called solvent extraction instead. The leach solution is repeatedly brought in contact with an organic solvent that doesn't mix with water. The solvent contains molecules that prefer to bind with certain rare-earth ions slightly more than others. When the two liquids touch and separate, a little more of one rare-earth element moves into the solvent than its neighbours do. The difference is small, so producers run the liquids through many stages in a row, until the process separates the elements one by one and each element has been collected in a separate stream at high purity.

Producers finally recover the elements from the liquid as a solid by precipitation: they add a compound that bonds with the rare-earth ions and becomes insoluble, falling out of the solution as a solid. The solids are filtered and washed, then heated to remove the water and some other substances, to finally yield a rare-earth oxide. The elements are usually stored and transported as these oxides.

If a manufacturer needs an element as a metal, the oxide is subjected to a reduction reaction in which the oxygen atoms react away from the oxide.

Some rare-earth ores contain thorium or uranium, which can make some waste streams radioactive and harder to store safely. Acids and bases can also create hazardous wastes if they aren't captured, treated, and recycled properly.

China's dominance

Because rare-earth elements' midstream refinement is so arduous, a country can have substantial deposits in the ground but still have to depend on other countries if it doesn't have the means to convert the ore into rare-earth oxides.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey's Mineral Commodity Summaries, the world has more than 90 million tonnes of rare-earth-oxide equivalent. Some notable national reserves include China (44 million tonnes, MT), Brazil (21 MT), India (6.9 MT), Australia (5.7 MT), Russia (3.8 MT), Vietnam (3.5 MT), the U.S. (1.9 MT), and Greenland (1.5 MT). Note: these estimates exclude scandium.

On December 23, Japan announced that in January and February 2026, it would excavate mud rich in rare-earth elements from 6 km underwater off Minamitori Island.

The International Energy Agency has estimated that China's position is especially strong in separation and refining, accounting for around 91% of global production, and around 94% of the production of sintered rare-earth permanent magnets.

Since many green technologies require motors, generators, and other hardware where high-performance magnets are crucial, countries are focusing on building refining and magnet-making capacity, rather than just approving new mines.

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

The flat is going to cost her a bomb

Luckily for her, her parents have very deep pockets

S. Upendran

"You're watching the news? That's very unusual, indeed! Thought you hated it."

"I do hate it. Always leaves me feeling depressed."

"If that's the case, why are you watching it now?"

"Was switching channels when I saw my cousin, Saroja. Ended up watching her interview with Rajdeep. She sounded very bullish about winning the upcoming..."

"Bullish? Does it mean to sound rather confident?"

"Very good! When you're bullish about something, you're very optimistic about it. This is one of the meanings of the word."

"I see! In other words, when you're 'bullish', you're quite confident that you will be successful in whatever it is you're doing. In this case, your cousin is quite confident of winning the election."

"Exactly! My boss is very bullish about the two products the company is launching next month."

"Meaning, he's quite confident they'll be successful. How about this example? Sunitha is very bullish about getting a promotion."

"She's always in a bullish mood."

"That's true. She's always positive. Gives everyone hope."

"True! She's quite bullish that the bank will approve her loan. She's keen on buying a four-bedroom flat near..."

"The flat! She showed it to me last week. It's beautiful, but looks really expensive."

"It is! It's going to cost her a bomb!"

"Cost her a bomb? Does it mean that it's very expensive?"

"Very good! The expression 'cost a bomb' is used in informal contexts. When you say the house costs a bomb, what you're suggesting it costs a lot. Here's an example. The tickets for the World Cup final must have cost Amit a bomb."

"He can easily afford them. Have you seen the designer clothes he wears? I'm sure they cost a bomb."

"It's also possible to say 'spend a bomb', 'save a bomb' 'worth a bomb', etc. I'm sure Sunitha will spend a bomb furnishing the new apartment."

"Let's hope that Sunitha gets the loan from the bank."

"Even if she doesn't get the loan, I don't think it matters. She'll end up buying it."

"How's that possible?"

"Don't you know that her parents have very deep pockets?"

"What does it mean?"

"When you say that someone has deep pockets, what you're suggesting is that the individual is wealthy."

"Since his pockets are deep, he can put a lot of money in them!"

"Exactly! Many of the families in this neighbourhood have deep pockets."

"There's no one in my family who has deep pockets."

"That's a good example. The expression can be used with corporations as well. A company that has substantial financial resources is said to have deep pockets. For example, Ashwin has been asking companies with deep pockets to fund his project."

"I'm sure some company with deep pockets will help him out."

"Dream on!"

upendrankye@gmail.com

THE DAILY QUIZ

Mongolia is celebrating its Independence Day today. Here is a quiz on the Asian nation

V. V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1
Mongolia is the largest landlocked country that does not border an inland sea. Between which two big nations is it located?

QUESTION 2
What is the 'Morin Khuur' in the context of the nation's art and culture?

QUESTION 3
Name the Capital of Mongolia and what does it literally mean?

QUESTION 4
How does one better know the famous warrior Temujin, who unified the warring steppe tribes at a great council (kurultai) in 1206?

QUESTION 5
What is the name of the traditional fermented mare's milk drink that is a staple of the Mongolian diet?

QUESTION 6
One of the most critically endangered animals on the planet (with only about 30-35 left in the wild) is the 'Mazaalai'. Its common name comes from a big feature in the Mongolian landscape. What is it?

QUESTION 7
What do a 'deel' and a 'ger' mean to a Mongolian?

Visual Question:
What is the symbol on the Mongolian National Flag called?

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. In which village and province was Mao Zedong born? **Ans: Shaoshan, Hunan.**
2. Which influential early essay by Mao examined physical education and national strength? **Ans: A Study of Physical Culture (1917)**
3. What was the name of the arduous 1934-35 retreat that became symbolic of Chinese communist endurance? **Ans: The Long March**
4. Which poetic work was written by Mao in 1936, soon after the Long March? **Ans: Snow: To the Tune of Chin Yuan Chun**
5. How old was Mao at the time of his death in 1976? **Ans: 82 years old**
Visual: This 1971 painting by Tang Xiao calls back to Mao's famous 1966 swim across China's longest river. Identify this river. **Ans: Yangtze River**
Early Birds: Tamal Biswas | Parimal Das | Vidyasagar Reddy Kethiri | Surojit Pal | Piyali Tuli

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Word of the day

Credence:
belief in or acceptance of something as true

Synonyms: certainty, trust, conviction

Usage: *The news report gave credence to the claim.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/credencepro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /kredəns/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

Wishing you a Happy New Year!
CHRIST
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)
BANGALORE | DELHI NCR | PUNE
35,000+ STUDENTS
2100+ PHD SCHOLARS
1600+ FACULTY MEMBERS
12500+ SCOPUS INDEXED PUBLICATION
2200+ PATENTS PUBLISHED
630+ PATENTS GRANTED
180+ PROGRAMMES OFFERED
150+ INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIONS
135+ URBAN SLUMS AND VILLAGES ADOPTED
40+ CENTRES FOR STUDENT WELLBEING, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
CRAFTING EXCELLENCE.
SHAPING DREAMS.
AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION COMMITTED TO ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE AND FOSTERING A CULTURE OF SERVICE.
ST. KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA
(FOUNDER, CMI CONGREGATION)
"NURTURING EXCELLENCE, EXCELLENCE, ENRICHING LIVES, TRANSFORMING FUTURES"
Striving towards our vision of blending Excellence and Service in education, CHRIST (Deemed to be University) has been committed to imparting quality education since its inception in 1969. With the educational vision of our founder, St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, at the crux of our service, we are dedicated to serving the society through cells such as the CEDBEC (Centre for Education beyond Curriculum) and CSA (Centre for Social Action). The university was granted autonomous status in 2005 and was classified as an institution with potential for excellence in 2006.
PROGRAMMES OFFERED
ARCHITECTURE
ARTS AND HUMANITIES
COMMERCE, FINANCE AND ACCOUNTANCY
LAW
SCIENCES
SOCIAL SCIENCES
PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES
BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT
EDUCATION
ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY
ONLINE DEGREES
BACHELOR OF COMMERCE
BACHELOR OF COMPUTER APPLICATION
MASTER OF ARTS (APPLIED ECONOMICS)
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DATA SCIENCE
MASTER OF COMPUTER APPLICATIONS
MASTER OF ARTS (ENGLISH WITH COMMUNICATION STUDIES)
MASTER OF SCIENCE (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND MACHINE LEARNING)
INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONAL BODY COLLABORATIONS
(IMA, CIMA, ACCA, CISI, CPA, THE BRITISH PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY)
LEARN MORE
www.christuniversity.in
online.christuniversity.in
BANGALORE CENTRAL CAMPUS
BANGALORE BANNERGHATTA ROAD CAMPUS
BANGALORE KENGERI CAMPUS
BANGALORE YESHWANTHPUR CAMPUS
PUNE LAVASA CAMPUS
DELHI NCR CAMPUS

Kerala politics spills over to Karnataka

The statements of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and AICC general secretary Venugopal after an eviction drive in Bengaluru are seen as part of a narrative building exercise ahead of Assembly polls in Kerala expected early next year

Sharath S. Srivatsa
BENGALURU

The close political battle between the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) in Kerala seems to have spilled over to Karnataka ahead of the Assembly polls in Kerala, expected to be held in April/ May 2026. The statements of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary (Organisation) K.C. Venugopal over the demolition of over 150 "illegal" structures in Kogilu Layout in Bengaluru are being attributed to their political agenda ahead of the elections.

Mr. Venugopal's statement on Saturday criticising the demolition, which seems to have made Congress leaders in Karnataka embarrassed, came close after Mr. Vijayan termed the demolition in Faqir Colony and Waseem Layout as "brutal normalisation of bulldozer raj".

He said, "Sadly, the Sangha Parivar's anti minority politics is now being executed under a Congress government in Karnataka".

Deputy Chief Minister and KPCC president D.K. Shivakumar hit back at Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan for 'unnecessary interference without an understanding of the facts'. FILE PHOTO

On the backfoot

While Karnataka's Deputy Chief Minister and KPCC president D.K. Shivakumar hit back at Mr. Vijayan for "unnecessary interference without an understanding of the facts," the central Congress leader, in contrast, expressed "AICC's serious concern". This has put the Karnataka Congress leaders on the backfoot.

At the centre of their statements, a political observer based out of Thiruvananthapuram pointed out, is the upcoming Assembly elections expected to be closely fought. "The Congress has done well in the recently-concluded local bodies elections in Kerala, even as the CPI(M) has ceded ground to the BJP. By using the demolition that has affected families from minority communities, the CPI(M) wants to portray Congress in a poor light, that they are not safe under the Congress regime". Kerala has a high Muslim electorate, especially in the northern districts.

In the 2021 Kerala Assembly polls, the CPI(M) polled 25.38 % of the total votes, winning 62 seats, while the Congress polled 25.12% of the total votes winning 21 seats. The total vote share of LDF was 41.5 % while it was 38.4 % for UDF. Mr. Vijayan's statement has been followed up by the visit of CPI(M) leaders to the demolition site. CPI(M) Rajya Sabha member from Kerala A.A. Rahim, and Independent legislator and former Minister in Left Democratic Front (LDF) K.T. Jaleel were among those who visited Kogilu. At the national level, CPI(M) is part of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc led by the Congress.

CM aspiration

Within the Karnataka Congress, though there is a feeling that demolition could have been better handled, "outside interference" has irked the leaders.

"It is well known that Mr. Venugopal is an aspirant for the Chief Minister's post if Congress comes to power in Kerala. As a CM aspirant, he must have found it fit to jump into an issue already raised by Mr. Vijayan. Why would AICC interfere in internal issues of a State otherwise?" a senior Minister said, insisting that the demolition had no communal angle. "Is it wrong to vacate illegal structures?" Meanwhile, it is also learnt that the CPI (M) Karnataka leaders have conveyed to their counterparts in Kerala that the party machinery in the State is strong enough to fight the case on its own. "We feel that outside interference will not help the cause since it becomes political".

Kerala outreach

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Congress government has been under the lens over its outreach to Kerala over the past two years. A compensation of ₹15 lakh provided to a resident of Wayanad in Kerala in an elephant attack and a subsequent announcement of ₹10 crore to compensate 100 families affected by floods in Wayanad came under attack by the BJP. While Wayanad was initially represented by the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, his sister Priyanka Gandhi represents the constituency now.

BJP and DKS spar over Venugopal's post

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

AICC general secretary (Organisation) K.C. Venugopal's social media post on Saturday led to a political exchange with the BJP attacking the Congress, even as Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar defended his party leader's post as "advice" and not interference in administration.

"It is a matter of serious concern as to who the people of Karnataka actually elected," BJP State president B.Y. Vijayendra said on social media platform 'X'. "This goes beyond political hypocrisy. It is a direct affront to the people of Karnataka, who voted for a government in Bengaluru, not for an invisible authority issuing commands from Delhi".

Questioning Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Mr. Shivakumar, he asked: "After passionately defending the government's actions in Kogilu village and sermonising on X to the Kerala Chief Minister, will you show the same courage and address that message to your AICC boss K.C. Venugopal?" Former Deputy Chief Minister C.N. Ashwathnarayan said that the CPI(M) and Congress are in a race to appease Muslim voters. Though demolitions happened in Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda's constituency, he has been quiet, he said. "On the other hand, people with legal documents are running around the posts for e-khatas," he added. However, Mr. Shivakumar told reporters on Sunday that Mr. Venugopal had no more than advised, demanding to know if BJP's central leaders offer advice to State leaders. Ours is a national party and all of us have our responsibilities".

Meeting on Monday

Mr. Shivakumar on Sunday said that the Chief Minister has convened a meeting on Monday to discuss the issue. He said that eligible families that were removed from encroachment would be rehabilitated under the Rajiv Gandhi Housing project.

CORRIDORS OF POWER

Multiple aspirants

As the Congress high command has been unable to resolve the leadership crisis in Karnataka, loyalists of different leaders have begun projecting names for the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister posts.

The Baba Saheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Dalita Seva Samithi members staged a protest near the venue of the party's Congress Working Committee in New Delhi on Saturday, demanding the appointment of Home Minister and Dalit leader G. Parameshwara as the Chief Minister in case the party decides to replace incumbent Siddaramaiah. They stated that they had submitted petitions to AICC general secretary K.C. Venugopal and former AICC chief and MP Sonia Gandhi, seeking to fulfil their demand for a Dalit Chief Minister.

Mr. Parameshwara, who earlier held the Deputy Chief Minister's post and served as the KPCC chief for a record eight years, was the most suitable

candidate, the Samiti members claimed.

Meanwhile, in Bengaluru, supporters of Housing Minister B.Z. Zameer Ahmed put up posters and banners in different localities mentioning his name as "upcoming Deputy Chief Minister".

Athletes sidelined

When a national-level sporting event is held at a certain place, local sportspersons are generally expected to receive due prominence. However, this was not the case in Mangaluru. Olympian M.R. Poovamma and national Kabaddi player Dhanalakshmi Poojary were sidelined during the inauguration of the two-day National Swimming Championship held at the new international swimming pool in Yemmekere.

Both athletes were invited onto the stage but were the last to be honoured, after D. Vedavyas Kamath, MLA, a former area councillor, and other officials. Sensing the situation, Ms. Poovamma chose to leave the stage midway.

When Ms. Dhanalakshmi approached the microphone to speak, a police official on the dais stood up to exit the venue. The organisers then diverted their attention to presenting the official with a memento and escorting him out. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Kamath left the stage, prompting the organisers to gather around him. Throughout this episode, Ms. Dhanalakshmi was left standing silently at the microphone.

Conflicting narratives

The unfortunate cylinder blast which claimed three lives in Mysuru last week has evoked a slew of political responses, each different from the other. First, the BJP appears to be speaking in two voices on the same incident. While city-level leaders, pointing to a series of recent crimes, have raised serious concerns over the law-and-order situation and even demanded the deployment of CISF or other national security force at the palace.

In contrast, Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamraja Wadiyar, MP for Mysuru, who is also from the BJP, has struck a calmer note. Terming the balloon-cylinder blast an accident, he refused to equate it with the ''breakdown'' of law and order in the city.

The Congress, on its part, seems to have made up its mind even before the investigation has run its course.

Senior leaders, including the district in charge Minister H.C. Mahadevappa and Home Minister G. Parameshwara, termed it an accident, and thus virtually indicated the direction in which the probe should proceed. It appears that the politics surrounding the blast has gained more traction than the investigation itself.

Nagesh Prabhu
Raghava M.
Krisha Kumar R.

Competition

BENGALURU The Hosathu Monthly Magazine has announced a State-level essay and speech competition for students.

There is no entry fee and participants must submit their entries on or before January 25, 2026. For details, contact 080-22161911/12 or email at hosathu@gmail.com.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that our clients intend to purchase the immovable property described in the Schedule hereunder from its owners (1). R.T. Raju, S/o.Thimmaaih, aged about 65 years, (2). Harshita R, D/o. R.T. Raju aged 32 Years, both are residing at Rameswara Village, Rameswara Street, Doddabllapur Taluk, Bangalore Rural District.

Any person/s having any claim, right, or interest over the schedule property or any objections to the proposed purchase, may file their objections in writing along with copies of supporting documents to the undersigned within 14 days from the date of this publication, failing which my client will be advised to go ahead and complete the sale formalities.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of the agricultural land bearing Old Sy. No.37, New Sy No. 37/2, situated at Rameswara Village, Doddabelavangala Hobli, Doddabellapura Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District, measuring 27 Guntas out of 3 Acres 38 Guntas and bounded on;

East by: Government Road **West by:** Property belongs to Govindaraju, S/o. Thimmahanumaiah **North by:** Property belongs to Raghavendra S/o. Jayaramaiah **South by:** Remaining portion of Land belonging to Hanumaiah @ Hanumappa

Sd/- AKHILA ASSOCIATES (Advocates)
No.83, First Floor, Cropexium,
Service Road, Karthiknagar,
Doddanekkundi, Marathahalli, Bangalore-560037. Ph. 9741300393 / 7624808373

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

OUR BELOVED MOTHER

SMT. JAYALAKSHMI NARAYANAN ("Jaya Mami")

Carnatic, Bhajan & Thiruppugazh Singer
& MahaPeriyava Devotee
(wife of late Shri S. V. Narayanan, Retd. ITAT, Member - Veda Rakshana Nidhi Trust, Mumbai), attained Sivaloka Prapthi on 23rd December 2025 at our home in Thane. **Dasasthu** on 1st January 2026 & **Subha Sweekaram** & **Gruha Yagyam** on 4th January 2026 from 11.00 am to 2.00 pm at 305-306, Silver Arch, B Wing, Samatanagar, Thane (W) - 400606. Tel: 9820142618 / 9820008201.

With Reverence
Sons: V. Shankar [Thane, India] & V. Suresh [Florida, USA]
Daughter: Dr. Subhashini Valavalkar [Texas, USA]
Daughters-in-law: Uma Shankar & Srirekha NC
Son-in-law: Dr. Sushil Valavalkar
Grandchildren: Shruti, Anand, Shloka
Grandson-in-law: Abhijeet Kamath
Great Grandchildren: Avani & Swara
& the entire Avadhani and Vavvaneri families.

Hari Aum ! Aum Shanti !

BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE

Your Leadership has shown us the way,
We are grateful for the guidance you provided.

Remembering
AR. Ramaswamy Chettiar
On His 101st Birth Anniversary
Date of Birth 29/12/1924

Sree Visalam Chit Fund Ltd.

Former Managing Director : Sree Visalam Chit Fund Ltd
Former Director : The Nellai Finance Pvt Ltd
Former Director : Aruna Chemicals & Farms Pvt Ltd
Former Trustee : Sree Visalam Charitable Trust

We will always cherish your memory...

AR. Viswanathan Chairman
AR. Meenakshi Director
AR. Umapathy Managing Director

Family, relatives, friends, and the staff of Sree Visalam Chit Fund Ltd.

We will strive to create a better world through your guidance.

CLASSIFIEDS MART

TO ADVERTISE VISIT
www.thehinduads.com
Bengaluru: 98455 29981 ■ 080-22071826
Mangaluru: 0824-2417575 ■ 2417580
Hubballi: 0836-2338600 ■ 2335700

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, IMAMSAHEB Shaikh Alias Nadaf, s/o; Abdulqadar Imamsaheb Nadaf, r/o: Ft No.A9 504, Provident Harmony Apt, Chokkanahalli Main Rd Hegdenagar, Blr–560064. Have changed my name as Imamsaheb Shaikh Urf Nadaf.

I, NAJMOON Abdulqadar Nadaf, w/o; Abdulqadar Imamsaheb Nadaf, r/o: Ft No A9 504, Provident Harmony Apts, Chokkanahalli Main Rd Hegdenagar, Blr–560064. Have changed my name as Najamun Abdulkhadar Nadaf.

I, SWALEHA Parveen Shaikh, w/o; Imamsaheb Shaikh Urf Nadaf, r/o: Ft No–A9 504, Provident Harmony Apts, Chokkanahalli Main Rd Hegdenagar, Blr–560064. Have changed my name as Swaleha Parveen Zartargar.

We, Nikesh Pandhanda S/o Govindan.P and Sithara Nikesh W/o Nikesh Pandhanda R/o No. 46, B-Block Thirumalanagar, Attur 2nd Stage, Yelahanka, Bengaluru-64 have changed our minor son's name from Adhidev Nikesh to Adhidev Nikesh Pandhanda for all further purposes. Vide affidavit 26 Dec 2025 before notary G. Ravichandra Reddy Bengaluru

REAL ESTATE

K.K. NAGAR Chennai BUNGALOW 1 Grnd (40x60). Arnd. 2500 sft Built–up area. Ph:7305623919. No Brokers.

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE
MADRAS RACE CLUB
CIN : U74999TN1922NPL001455
Regd. Office : Post Box 2639
Guindy, Chennai – 600 032.
Website : www.madrasraceclub.com
Tel. No. 91-44 22351171/2/3/5 & 22350774
Email Id : secretary@madrasraceclub.com

NOTICE OF EXTRA ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the **Extra Ordinary General Meeting ('EGM')** of the **MADRAS RACE CLUB** ('The Club') is scheduled to be held on **Monday, 19th January 2026 at 10.00 A.M. (IST) at the Registered Office of the Club, situated at Guindy, Chennai – 600 032, and also through Video Conference ("VC")/Other Audio Visual Means ("OAVM")** to transact the Special Business, as set out in the Notice of the EGM.

Instructions for Members intending to attend the EGM at the Venue and vote at the venue or join the Extra Ordinary General Meeting electronically and vote electronically are detailed in the Notice of the EGM.

Notice of the EGM has been sent through electronic mode to those Members whose e-mail addresses are registered with the Club and hard copy has been posted to those who do not have or who have not furnished the email id. The same will also be available on the Club's website at **www.madrasraceclub.com** and on the website of National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL), **www.evoting.nsdl.com** the service providers for assisting such members who wish to participate in the meeting electronically.

Club Members are requested to register / update their email address by writing to the Club with details of their membership number and attaching a self-attested copy of PAN Card as identity proof and self-attested copy of any document (viz. Driving Licence, Election Identity Card, Passport) in support of the address of the member at **secretary@madrasraceclub.com** or to **evoting@nsdl.com**

The Club has engaged the services of NSDL as the authorised agency for assisting Members in participating in the EGM electronically and for providing e-voting facility. Members can cast their vote online from **10.00 A.M. (IST) on Friday, 16th January 2026 till 5.00 P.M. (IST) on Sunday, 18th January 2026.** At the end of remote e-voting period, the facility shall be disabled. The Members who have cast their vote by remote e-voting prior to the EGM may also attend/participate in the EGM through VC/OAVM but shall not be entitled to cast their vote again. Such members who have not participated in e-voting, shall be eligible to participate in the voting at the venue at the Extra Ordinary General Meeting, subject to verification of all data. Instructions for voting at the venue in the premises of the Club are separately detailed in the Notes forming part of the Notice, convening the Extra Ordinary General Meeting of the Members of the Club.

Only those members, whose names are recorded in the Register of Members as on the 'cut-of-date' ie. **Wednesday, 24th December 2025** only shall be entitled to vote.

In terms of Articles of Association of the Club, no Club Member shall be entitled to vote at or take part in any meeting of the Club until all moneys due to the Club by him have been paid. Hence, Club Members are requested to settle all their dues on or before **5.00 P.M. on Monday, 12th January 2026** in order to cast their vote.

Queries/grievances, if any, with regard to e-voting, may be addressed to the Secretary, Madras Race Club, through e-mail at **secretary@madrasraceclub.com** OR may please visit Help and FAQs section available at **www.evoting.nsdl.com** or Contact Number - **022 4886 7000.**

By Order of the Committee of Management of MADRAS RACE CLUB
S.NIRMAL PRASAD
Secretary
Place : Chennai
Date : Wednesday, 24th December 2025

Panel to recommend reviving student body elections

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Shivakumar says current crop of leaders, including himself, came to politics through student body elections. Later they were banned after violence surged

Student union elections that have been banned for over three decades in Karnataka are being sought to be revived by the Congress government.

A nine-member committee has been formed to recommend ways to hold student body elections in the State, through which new leaders could be identified. The panel that will have Ministers M.C. Sudhakar and Sharan Prakash Patil, MLCs Saleem Ahmed and Puttanna, besides former Youth Congress presidents and NSUI presidents, will submit a report to the government, Deputy Chief Minister and KPCC president D.K. Shivakumar said on Sunday.

Speaking at the Congress Foundation Day, Mr. Shivakumar said that the current crop of leaders, including himself, came to politics through student body elections.

"Later when violence during the student body elections surged, it was stopped".

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

INVITATION FOR TENDERS
(Through KPP Portal Only)

BWSSB invites Tenders from Registered agencies for the following works.

Office of the Chief Engineer (Design & QA), 9th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bangalore - 560 009.

Sl. No.	Division	IFT Number	Amount Put to Tender(Rs.) / EMD Amount(Rs.)	Last date & Time for submission of tender	Date and time for opening of tender
1	Quality Assurance	BWSSB/EQATE/PB/1283/ 2025-26 Date: 23.12.2025	Rs. 49,02,269/- / Rs. 98,100/-	05.01.2026 upto 05:30 pm	07.01.2026 at 12:00 noon
2		BWSSB/EQATE/PB/1308/ 2025-26 Date: 24.12.2025	Rs. 23,34,811/- / Rs. 47,000/-	06.01.2026 upto 05:30 pm	08.01.2026 at 12:00 noon
3		BWSSB/EQATE/PB/1310/ 2025-26 Date: 24.12.2025	Rs. 32,37,500/- / Rs. 64,750/-	05.01.2026 upto 05:30 pm	07.01.2026 at 12:00 noon
4		BWSSB/EQATE/PB/1312/ 2025-26 Date: 24.12.2025	Rs. 65,93,200/- / Rs. 1,32,000/-		
5		BWSSB/EQATE/PB/1314/ 2025-26 Date: 24.12.2025	Rs. 29,56,963.73 / Rs. 59,200/-		
6		BWSSB/EQATE/PB/1317/ 2025-26 Date: 24.12.2025	Rs. 48,25,513/- / Rs. 96,510/-	06.01.2026 upto 05:30 pm	08.01.2026 at 12:00 noon
7		BWSSB/EQATE/PB/1318/ 2025-26 Date: 24.12.2025	- / Rs. 38,000/-		

Sd/- Executive Engineer (Quality Assurance)

The details regarding the tender and participating in the e-procurement process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** For further details contact the above signed office during working hours.

DIPR/CP/JA/4686/2025-26

TO BOOK
THANKSGIVING
Advertisements
in
THE HINDU
Contact:
080 - 22071800 / 22864240
080 - 22071826 / 22071827
Rate per advertisement (3.5 X 5 cms) Rs. 790/-

A BG-BGE

'VB G-RAM G Act will hit Karnataka's finances'

The State estimates it will have to fund about ₹20,000 cr. since the new Act replaces MGNREGA Act under which the Centre funded the entire cost

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

At a time when Karnataka is staring at a revenue loss of about ₹18,000 crore a year due to rationalisation of GST rates, the State is staring at an additional expenditure of about ₹3,000 crore to ₹4,000 crore annually. This is because the new Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) requires the State government to fund 40% of the cost incurred.

Over the next five years, Karnataka estimates that it would have to fund about ₹20,000 crore since the new Act replaced the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) under which the Centre funded the entire cost. Accusing that the name change initiative decision was taken

In the last two and a half years, 17 lakh village-level assets have been created while providing 80 lakh families livelihood at a cost of ₹21,144 crore in Karnataka ARUN KULKARNI

"at the residence of the Prime Minister and not in cabinet", Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said, "In their attempt to wipe out the name of Mahatma Gandhi, the BJP is destroying the rural economy. They are trying to burden the State government, which should be foiled".

Gandhi's memory

Speaking at the Congress Foundation Day celebrations here, he said, "Just by changing the name, can they wipe away Gandhi from memory?" The Congress Working Committee has decided to protest this move from the panchayat level from January 5, he added.

Meanwhile, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister Priyank Kharge at a press conference on Saturday said the legislation has curtailed the right to livelihood, rights of panchayats, and burdened States financially without seeking their opinion." He further said, "The 16th Finance Commission has already submitted its report to the Centre. Has the Centre discussed the 60:40 ratio of funding the rural employment scheme under the new Act with the States? Has it informed the Commission about the new expenditure on the States? If we have to bear ₹3,000 crore to ₹4,000 crore every year, has this information been provided to the Commission?"

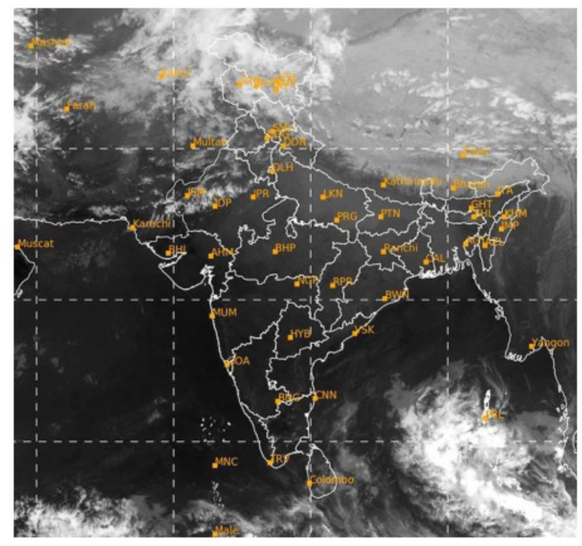
The Minister pointed out that in the last two and a half years, 17 lakh village-level assets have been created while providing 80 lakh families livelihood at a cost of ₹21,144 crore in Karnataka.

Curtailing powers

Stating that the Centre is curtailing the power of the States, the Minister feared that the unemployment in rural areas and attempts to harass, violating minimum wages will increase. "Participation of women in employment will reduce from the current 58%. The rural employment guarantee will no more a legislation but just another government scheme, and it will promote contractor-led projects."

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Cold wave conditions very likely at isolated places over Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Chandigarh & Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab. Cold Day conditions very likely at isolated places over Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Dense to Very Dense Fog very likely at isolated places over Haryana, Chandigarh & Delhi, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	19.0	12.0	Kozhikode	—	34.0	23.5
Ahmedabad	—	28.7	14.8	Kurnool	—	30.0	16.4
Aizawl	—	26.6	9.9	Lucknow	—	15.3	10.4
Allahabad	—	14.6	8.0	Madurai	—	32.5	21.2
Bengaluru	—	26.4	15.9	Mangaluru	—	31.6	21.0
Bhopal	—	26.3	4.8	Mumbai	—	32.3	17.2
Bhubaneswar	—	27.4	13.1	Mysuru	—	28.0	13.4
Chandigarh	—	21.7	5.6	New Delhi	—	22.5	6.3
Chennai	—	29.7	20.9	Patna	—	16.0	10.9
Coimbatore	—	31.0	19.4	Port Blair	—	29.6	24.2
Dehradun	—	22.6	7.4	Puducherry	—	29.2	20.4
Gangtok	—	16.2	8.0	Pune	—	26.9	9.5
Goa	—	32.1	18.9	Raipur	—	27.6	9.2
Guwahati	—	19.0	14.9	Ranchi	—	23.7	6.0
Hubballi	—	28.8	13.3	Shillong	—	—	—
Hyderabad	—	27.2	13.2	Shimla	—	17.5	9.0
Imphal	—	23.8	13.5	Srinagar	—	12.6	0.8
Jaipur	—	24.8	8.5	Thiruvananthapuram	—	33.7	22.7
Kochi	—	30.6	24.8	Tiruchi	—	30.5	20.6
Kohima	—	26.6	10.6	Vijayawada	—	30.0	18.2
Kolkata	—	21.7	13.6	Visakhapatnam	—	27.9	19.7

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.82	.75	.49	134	166	
Bengaluru	.10	.32	.—	163	109	
Chennai	.9	.19	.31	184	122	
Delhi	.35	.76	102	454	444	
Hyderabad	.15	.20	.52	134	141	
Kolkata	.12	.17	.30	265	173	
Lucknow	.7	.44	.65	241	210	
Mumbai	.11	.51	.15	144	123	
Pune	.—	.34	.64	311	231	
Visakhapatnam	.15	.64	.47	307	227	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Noida, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 419 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Damoh, Madhya Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 25

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

7 held for ATM theft using shutter tampering trick

The Hindu Bureau
WARANGAL

The Warangal Police have unearthed a new modus operandi involving attention diversion and tampering of ATM cash dispenser shutters to steal money, with the arrest of a seven-member inter-State gang at Kazipet on Sunday.

According to the police , the accused targeted specific ATMs by inserting steel plates behind the cash dispenser shutters, blocking the cash from being dispensed. "While customers received debit alerts indicating successful withdrawals, no cash came out of the machines. After the customers left the ATM premises assuming a technical fault, the accused re-entered using duplicate keys and retrieved the cash trapped inside the dispenser," she added.

Cash amounting to ₹5.10 lakh was recovered.

Scientists seek clarifications on NoC for drilling operation in Krishna delta

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

The Hyderabad-based Scientists For People has written to Krishna District Collector D.K. Balaji seeking disclosure of the scientific studies, regulatory framework and safeguards considered before the Water Resources Department issued a no-objection certificate (NoC) to Vedanta Limited for onshore oil and gas drilling operations in the Kaza block in Krishna district.

The Water Resources Department issued the NoC on December 22 for drilling wells at 20 locations in Guduru and Movva mandals for the production of onshore oil and gas through the hydraulic fracturing process.

Stressing that there are scientifically recognised risks associated with hydraulic fracturing and allied drilling activities, particularly in canal-irrigated, groundwater-dependent deltaic regions such as the Krishna delta, the group sought detailed clarifications from the Collector.

They asked whether any site-specific studies were relied upon to assess potential impacts of fracturing fluids and chemicals on groundwater aquifers and irrigation canals. They also sought details on the hydrogeological suitability of the Krishna delta for such operations, the cumulative and long-term impacts arising from multiple drilling locations, and how the sustainability of large-scale groundwater withdrawal for the project was assessed.

Year-end tradition

New year celebrations: A 55-foot-tall Pappanji figure erected on the Veli Ground in Fort Kochi. The tradition of burning an effigy of Pappanji at midnight on New Year's eve symbolises the end of the passing year and welcoming of the new one. THULASI KAKKAT

DMK strongly opposes Cong. leaders' demand for share in power in T.N.

B. Kolappan
CHENNAI

As a section of Congress leaders intensified its demand for a "share in power" as a condition for continuing the alliance with the DMK for the 2026 Assembly election in Tamil Nadu, highly placed sources in the ruling party rejected the proposal outright.

"Such an arrangement [a coalition government] will not work in Tamil Nadu," a highly placed source in the DMK told *The Hindu* on Sunday. The source indicated that the party leadership would remain firm in its decision.

The demand gained momentum after All India Congress Committee Tamil Nadu in-charge Girish Chodankar, who heads the seat-sharing committee, made out a case for including his party in the next government.

"We will have a full-fledged manifesto committee and our own vision for Tamil Nadu. Our leaders will come to Tamil Nadu and announce various guarantees. Naturally, to fulfil the promises we make in the manifesto and to realise the vision we have for Tamil Nadu, we have to be part of the government," he told a news agency recently.

He contended that though the Congress had not been in power in the State for 58 years, its workers "are charged" and "working" day in and day out. His views were endorsed on Sunday by Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) president K. Selvaperunthagai, who said power-sharing was essential to fulfil the promises made to the people.

Congress leaders supported the demand by pointing out that Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had shared power with his allies, though he had the number to form a government on his own. However, the DMK leadership is learnt to have not taken kindly to such arguments.

Senior leaders of the ruling party are upset that despite a good rapport between Chief Minister M.K. Stalin and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, the national party has failed to act against some of its functionaries who are openly calling for severing ties and joining hands with actor Vijay's TVK.

The seat-sharing committee itself was formed by the Congress national leadership to dispel rumours that it might consider an alliance with the TVK.

Asked about the Congress's demand, CPI(M) Polit Bureau member G. Ramakrishnan said his party, an ally of the DMK, was not making any such demand. "If any of the allies makes such a demand, it is for the DMK leadership to decide," Mr. Ramakrishnan said.

BJP councillor demands CPI(M) MLA to vacate office

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Newly elected BJP councillor R. Sreelekha's demand to Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] MLA V.K. Prasanth to vacate his office at Sasthamangalam caused a row on Sunday.

Mr. Prasanth, who represents the Vattiyurkavu constituency, termed the demand politically motivated and said that there was no question of vacating as he had paid the rent till March 31 next year.

Ms. Sreelekha said that she had only made a request considering the inadequacies of the space allotted for the councillor in the same building.

Water-sharing issue set to dominate Telangana House's Winter Session

R. Ravikanth Reddy
HYDERABAD

The Winter Session of the Telangana Legislative Assembly begins on Monday amid heightened political tension, with focus on Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's aggressive posture and the expected attendance of Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) president and former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao.

The spotlight is on KCR following Mr. Revanth Reddy's public challenge to him to attend the House and participate in a detailed discussion on the contentious Krishna river water-sharing issues, which are expected to dominate the proceedings.

Eventful session: Legislative Assembly gears up for the winter session starting on Monday. SIDDHANT THAKUR

According to BRS sources, KCR is likely to attend the session, with senior party leaders claiming that he has shifted to his Nandinagar residence in the city, signalling preparedness for active participation.

Congress leaders say the Chief Minister is fully prepared to reiterate his charge that agreements signed during the BRS regime amounted to a "death warrant" for Telangana's interests in Krishna water sharing. The ruling party intends to press KCR to explain his consent to a 299 tmcft allocation and the alleged neglect of the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme, which, they argue, was sidelined in favour of the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project.

Politically, the Congress enters the session on a high after its victory in the Jubilee Hills byelection and subsequent success in the gram panchayat polls. The BRS, however, draws confidence from its better-than-expected performance in the rural elections.

The BJP, reeling from a relatively poor showing in both the Assembly and panchayat elections, has also stepped up its attack on the BRS over the Krishna water issue.

Industrial unit CEO arrested six months after explosion

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Telangana Police on Saturday arrested Sigachi Industries Limited chief executive officer (CEO) Amit Raj Sinha in connection with the industrial blast at Bhanur that killed 50 people and left several others injured nearly six months ago.

Mr. Sinha was named as accused no. 2 in the case registered by the police following a complaint lodged by the family members of the deceased workers. The blast occurred on June 30, after which a case of culpable homicide was booked against the company management.

The arrest followed an investigation carried out by the Patancheru police of Sangareddy district who examined the circumstances leading to the explosion at the industrial unit.

Amit Raj Sinha

The development came after the Telangana High Court insisted on action against the management while hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) petition filed by a group of retired scientists, seeking accountability for what has been described as the biggest industrial accident in the State.

Sigachi statement

In a statement, Sigachi Industries said that the police had registered an FIR against Mr. Sinha and others under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, and he was produced before the appropriate court as per procedure and remanded in judicial custody.

The company stated that it was fully cooperating with the legal process while ensuring that its rights under the law were respected, adding that updates would be shared with stakeholders.

The lost message

Assurances of state protection for minorities must go beyond symbolism

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's participation in a Christmas morning service on December 25, at the Cathedral Church of the Redemption in the national capital, was one that was noticed globally. Mr. Modi has hosted or visited Christian leaders or institutions during festivals, but taking part in a complete worship service at a church was a first for him. Mr. Modi also shared greetings and good wishes for peace, compassion and harmony on his social media account, invoking the teachings of Jesus Christ. Amid numerous reports of intimidation and violence against Christians during the Christmas season and even prior to that, Mr. Modi's church visit was meant as a gesture of reassurance for the minority community in India's diverse social landscape. Such symbolism of Governors participating in diverse traditions has been a feature of political pragmatism and also a genuine reflection of the syncretism that characterises Indian nationhood. The RSS, Mr. Modi's ideological cradle, has long considered Christianity and Islam as foreign to India. However, in recent years, it has sought to include these faiths also in its notion of national identity, and Mr. Modi's participation in the Christmas worship could be seen as yet another step toward moderation and tolerance.

But if that indeed is the message that Mr. Modi wants to convey, he needs to do it stronger and clearer for State governments and police forces under the control of his party to hear. Vandalism and violence against Christian places of worship and festivities have been recurring. From Assam, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Odisha, and other places, reported cases include disruption of worship and physical violence against church leaders. Spurious charges of conversion – which anyway is a matter of personal liberty and freedom of religion protected by the Constitution – are often raised to justify this violence. Even commercial activities related to Christmas have been disrupted by mobs in various parts of the country. Most of these incidents are linked to Sangh Parivar-affiliated individuals or groups. Even after Mr. Modi's Christmas message, no meaningful police action has followed against the mobs that indulged in the violence. On the contrary, intimidation and threats of violence against Christians and Muslims have continued, including by BJP leaders. All this points to the inadequacy of the symbolism of Mr. Modi's church visit. It would have been meaningful had the troublemakers and the law enforcers been sent the message. There is no sign of that, and that means the BJP either does not want to, or cannot, do anything more than shallow symbolism in favour of pluralism in India.

Sham election

Myanmar's junta's search for legitimacy through controlled polls is futile

The core of electoral democracy is the institution of popular will through representation. When elections are merely held to subvert this will by imposing favoured candidates, they are clearly a sham. Such is the case with Myanmar's three-phase elections being conducted by the junta nearly five years after it upended a democratically elected government and precipitated a raging civil war. Sunday marked the first phase in 102 townships, with the subsequent phases on January 11 (100 townships) and January 25 (63 townships). The junta controls barely half the country's townships, with elections being skipped in at least 65 areas. None of the major parties from the 2020 elections is participating, including the winner, the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by imprisoned leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Only the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), stuffed with former junta figures, is a force. This reminds one of the 2010 elections under the 2008 constitution which the NLD boycotted and which the USDP swept. But the situation is worse now, with the junta bombing and killing thousands of citizens for five years. It also faced its strongest challenge since the early 1960s as ethnic armed organisations and the NLD-affiliated People's Defence Forces (PDF), loyal to the opposition National Unity Government formed by NLD exiles, won control of significant territory. By late-2023, this coalition, armed with Chinese weapons, dealt the biggest blow through the Three Brotherhood Alliance (TBA) in Shan State and Rakhine, seizing townships along the China border.

The junta, sustained by Russian and Belarusian weaponry, was on the back foot until China changed tack in 2025, prioritising its geo-economic interests, particularly access to the Indian Ocean. Beijing pressured the TBA to cease hostilities and return control to the junta, which two groups reluctantly did earlier this year. This shift, as well as the lack of centralised command among Bamar-dominated PDFs and other ethnic insurgent groups, have allowed the junta to regain lost territory. Yet, the junta faces pitched battles across Rakhine, Karenni, Karen, Chin States and the Sagaing Region where it has only nominal control. Only China, Russia and Belarus have endorsed these "elections", and reports from Myanmar's capital and junta-controlled areas suggest participation to be far lower than in 2020. For now, the junta seeks legitimacy as it has gained a semblance of control or managed a bloody stalemate in the civil war. The military, led by tinpot leader Min Aung Hlaing, will retain its constitutionally enshrined 25% non-elected quota of legislative seats, ensuring army dominance regardless of results. But if history is a guide, farcical elections will not win popular support and Myanmar must brace for more conflict.

A grand vision and the great Indian research deficit

Shashi Tharoor

is the fourth-term Member of Parliament (Congress) for Thiruvananthapuram (Lok Sabha), an award-winning author and a former Minister of State for Human Resources Development

India stands at a pivotal moment in its economic and technological trajectory. With its vast human capital and a rapidly expanding economy, it harbours ambitions of becoming a global power. Yet, this grand vision is significantly hampered by a deep-seated and chronic insufficiency in research and development (R&D).

The scale in numbers

The scale of India's R&D deficit is best illustrated by a few stark numbers. Despite having 17.5% of the world's brains (since it is home to 17.5% of the world's population), India produces only a meagre 3% of the world's research output. This disparity highlights a fundamental failure in leveraging its massive demographic dividend to generate high-value research.

The situation is not much better on intellectual property creation. Recent reports from the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) suggest a mixed picture: dramatic growth from a very low base, but overall an unimpressive performance. In 2023, India was ranked sixth globally for total patent filings, recording 64,480 applications. This represents the fastest growth (+15.7%) among the top 20 countries and is a significant figure. However, in the context of the total 3.55 million patent applications filed globally in 2023, India's share is still low, at approximately 1.8% of the global total. Critically, when measuring resident applications per million inhabitants, a truer reflection of domestic innovation intensity, India ranks significantly lower (47th), underscoring that the overall growth is not yet translating into widespread, population-level innovation dominance.

The most damning evidence of India's R&D gap lies in R&D expenditure. Gross Expenditure on R&D in India, covering both private and public sectors, has consistently hovered between 0.6% and 0.7% of GDP in recent years (and is slipping as GDP grows). This figure pales in comparison to major economies and innovation hubs: China spends around 2.4%, the United States is at approximately 3.5%, and Israel leads globally at over 5.4%. To grasp the magnitude of underinvestment, one only needs to compare India's entire national R&D spend with that of a single multinational corporation. In 2023, the Chinese technology giant, Huawei, invested a colossal CNY 164.7 billion (approximately $23.4 billion) into R&D. This amount of spending from just one company – no doubt driven by intense global competition and U.S. sanctions, particularly focusing on crucial areas such as semiconductor technology – exceeds the total combined R&D expenditure of all public and private entities in India, a nation of more than 1.4 billion people. As Nvidia Chairman Jensen Huang noted, Huawei's relentless investment has propelled them to be "nanoseconds" behind the U.S. in advanced semiconductor capabilities. This corporate-level intensity of R&D is the engine of next-generation technological power. India's inability to muster even a fraction of this kind of concentrated, strategic investment speaks volumes about the challenge ahead for it.

> The current deficit in R&D investment cannot sustain India's ambition to become a global innovation leader

So much for the numbers. They are merely symptoms of deeper, structural problems within the Indian innovation ecosystem that it must tackle on a war footing.

The government sector is the funds driver

Most disappointingly, private sector participation in R&D spending is abysmal. A global hallmark of a mature innovation economy is the dominant role of the private sector in R&D. In developed nations, industry typically accounts for two-thirds or more of such expenditure. In India, however, the government sector (central, State, higher education, and public sector industry) remains the main driver, contributing approximately 63.6% of R&D funds, with the private industrial sector contributing only around 36.4%. India's business tycoons need to rise to the R&D challenge, but they are instead largely complacent and myopic about it. Indian industry's low investment is driven by a focus on incremental improvements over disruptive innovation, a preference for technology licensing over domestic development, and a general risk-averse culture.

The second dismaying feature is one we had already identified in the second tenure of the United Progressive Alliance: a persistent academia-industry disconnect, the subject of a report N.R. Narayana Murthy wrote for us more than a decade ago that is sadly gathering dust. Indian academia, despite producing millions of highly skilled graduates, often operates in a silo. Research is frequently theoretical and disconnected from the immediate, market-driven needs of the industry. The mechanisms for technology transfer, commercialisation of research, and joint industry-academic projects remain underdeveloped. Nor do Indian companies look to the world of academia for help. In the U.S., companies commonly bring ideas to universities and give grants for student researchers to develop them into marketable innovations. There is no such culture in India. This gulf prevents valuable research from crossing the "valley of death" between the laboratory and the marketplace.

And there is no escaping the brain drain. While India produces a vast number of PhDs and engineers, the most ambitious and the talented often seek better infrastructure, funding, and career progression opportunities abroad. The domestic R&D environment struggles to attract and retain world-class researchers due to limited high-end research facilities and lower salary benchmarks compared to the rest of the world.

The allocation of public R&D funds is often constrained by slow bureaucratic processes. Project approval times can be excessively long, and the release of funds is frequently staggered and unpredictable, impeding the smooth execution of ambitious, long-term research programmes.

What, then, is the path forward?

The goal of building comprehensive tech and economic muscle, worthy of a "Viksit Bharat", is not a sprint but a marathon. To achieve it, India must engineer a fundamental shift in its approach. The most immediate and critical step is to raise the R&D expenditure to GDP ratio to at least 2% within the next five to seven years. This requires a massive public spending commitment, coupled with substantial tax incentives and grants to encourage the private sector to ramp up its contribution to at least 50% of the total R&D spend. The launch of the ₹1 lakh crore Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Fund by the government is a step in the right direction, provided it is disbursed efficiently and targeted towards frontier technologies.

An ambitious India needs to move away from scattered research efforts and focus on national missions in strategic, high-value domains: semiconductors, artificial intelligence (AI), quantum computing, advanced materials and green energy. These missions require long-term, uninterrupted funding and clear, measurable outcomes tied to national security and economic sovereignty.

Universities and research

And there is no escaping India's obligation to reform higher education. Universities must transition from being purely teaching institutions to also becoming centres of excellence in research. This involves significantly boosting funding for PhD programmes, creating competitive research faculty positions, and building world-class research infrastructure. Furthermore, mandatory and structured mechanisms for industry-sponsored research chairs and joint incubation centres must be established to bridge the academic-industry gap.

India must also inculcate a robust intellectual property culture in the country. This means simplifying patent filing processes, strengthening enforcement, and creating attractive financial incentives for inventors (both academic and corporate) whose patents are commercialised.

India possesses the intellectual capital and the aspiration to become a global innovation leader. However, the current deficit in R&D investment – so glaringly exposed by the comparison to a single company such as Huawei – cannot sustain this ambition. The next decade must be dedicated to creating the structural, financial and cultural foundations for innovation. If these fundamental changes are not executed with political will and unwavering commitment, the goal of Viksit Bharat will recede well beyond 2047.

Linked civilisations, a modern strategic partnership

Mohammad Fathali

is Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in India

Relations between Iran and India transcend the boundaries of conventional diplomacy. They represent an ongoing dialogue between two ancient civilisations that emerged from a shared cultural womb at the dawn of human history. Long before the Aryan tribes divided – one settling on the Iranian plateau and the other in the fertile plains of the Indus and Ganges – they spoke related languages, worshipped through similar myths, and held a common worldview.

The profound resemblance between the Avesta and the Rigveda stands as clear testimony to this shared origin. Through centuries of political change, this civilizational affinity has nurtured a deep reservoir of trust and cultural understanding – never completely severed despite periods of distance and turmoil.

Nowhere is this historical bond more vividly reflected than in the enduring presence of Persian in the Indian subcontinent. India embraced Persian for centuries – not merely as a language, but as a vessel of art, diplomacy and poetry. This cultural hospitality gave rise to the luminous "Indian Style" (Sabk-e Hendi) in Persian literature, shaped by the imagination and creativity of Indo-Persian poets. Among them, Mirza Abdul-Qadir Bedil Dehlavi shines as the most illustrious figure – a poet whose philosophical depth and boundless imagination expanded the horizons of Persian poetry and continues to inspire scholars and writers across generations.

The modern drivers of ties

In today's world, nostalgia alone cannot sustain bilateral relations. Fortunately, the evolving geopolitical environment and economic needs have drawn Tehran and New Delhi closer than ever. As the global order tilts toward multipolarity, the Iran-India axis is positioned to assume a strategic role in shaping regional stability and economic architecture.

> A revitalised partnership between Iran and India will aid economic partnership and ensure stability in West Asia

Energy security remains a central pillar. India, one of the fastest-growing economies globally, continues to rely significantly on oil and gas to fuel its industries. With extensive hydrocarbon reserves, Iran stands as a natural partner in securing India's long-term energy needs.

Perhaps the most consequential arena of cooperation is transport and connectivity. India's participation in the development of the Chabahar Port signals the strategic weight both nations attach to this maritime gateway. Complementing this, Iran forms a vital link in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) – a multimodal route connecting India to Russia and Northern Europe through Iran. This corridor is approximately 40% shorter and 30% more cost-efficient when compared to the traditional Suez Canal route, granting both countries a competitive advantage in Eurasian trade.

Security and technology

Beyond commerce, Iran and India share mutual concerns regarding regional security. The rise of extremism and terrorism in West and South Asia threatens both nations, making intelligence cooperation a discreet yet essential foundation of bilateral ties.

Challenges remain. Historically, third-party pressures have influenced the trajectory of relations. Yet, India has often navigated these complexities by prioritising its national interest with strategic prudence. In an era marked by shifting power centres and the rise of Asia, it is imperative for both countries to strengthen flexible financial mechanisms – such as trade through local currencies – to reduce vulnerability to external constraints.

The future demands diversification beyond traditional oil trade. Cooperation in knowledge-based industries, information technology – where India holds significant comparative advantage – and in nanotechnology and the medical sciences (fields in which Iran has made remarkable progress), can open new horizons of economic partnership.

Such collaboration can transform the relationship from transactional to innovation-driven, benefiting both societies.

A shared future built on an ancient past

Iran and India may rightly be described as one soul in two bodies – united by history, enriched by culture, and positioned by geography to complement one another. If the Silk Road and Persian language once formed the bridge between them, today, energy cooperation, counterterrorism and strategic transit connectivity serve as the new pillars of partnership.

As the two nations mark the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations, the moment is ripe for Tehran and New Delhi to transform historical goodwill into a bold, forward-looking alliance. A revitalised partnership will not only enhance the prosperity of their peoples but also anchor stability in the turbulent landscape of West Asia.

The time has come for Iran and India, guided by their shared legacy and mutual interests, to design a future that is collaborative, resilient, and independent, echoing the ancient symphony of civilisations that still binds them today.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bangladesh's future

The recent coverage of Tarique Rahman's historic return to Bangladesh underscores a pivotal moment in South Asian politics. This moment offers both promise and peril. Bangladesh's future hinges not only on charismatic leadership but also on a genuine commitment to democratic freedoms, accountability and pluralism. Mr. Rahman's repeated calls for unity and a "safe, inclusive Bangladesh" are heartening, but they must be matched with clear policies to protect minority rights and human rights for all citizens, particularly at a time when sectarian violence and unrest have caused deep societal fissures.

Kenneth John George,
Angamaly, Kerala

Save the Aravallis

The Aravalli ranges have served as a natural wall to keep the desert at bay, a pollution sink, a perennial source of groundwater and home to diverse flora and fauna. What nature has made over millions of years is now being destroyed by relentless and reckless mining and quarrying and construction. Of course, as always and everywhere, the fig leaf is 'development' and 'economic growth'. The fine-sounding phrase, 'sustainable mining plan', is coined only to continue the degradation and destruction. The ranges must be defined by criteria such as as geology, geography, hydrology, wildlife connectivity, climate resilience and the vital functions that they perform. These criteria cannot be substituted by 'height'. The fragmentation of a life-supporting ecosystem would be the height of folly and spell disaster.

G. David Milton,
Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

A silence that matters

It is of great concern that certain elements in the right wing are engaged in the vandalisation of churches and Christmas decorations, with some incidents of violence against Christians on the eve of Christmas. What is appalling is that policemen, who should have prevented such elements from committing such atrocities, remained mute spectators. Moreover, none of the tall leaders of the government of the day came forward to condemn the attacks by the goons, leave alone initiating any action against them.

The Prime Minister visited the Cathedral Church of Redemption in New Delhi on Christmas day.

Yet, there was not a word about the attacks or signs of remorse. Does not the visit to the church amount to just appeasement politics?

Tharcius S. Fernando,
Chennai

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

Tamil Nadu needs to think beyond the metro

Last month, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin criticised the Union government for denying metro rail projects to Coimbatore and Madurai. This created some political controversy and also sparked a wave of urban aspiration. For many people, glitzy metros have become a sign of development and modernity. The absence of metros feels like a slight; their approval, a stamp of urban arrival.

But we need to step back and ask a crucial question: do cities like Madurai and Coimbatore actually need metro rail systems? Or has the metro become an elite-driven aspiration that is fundamentally misaligned with how Indian cities move and live?

Tikender Singh Panwar

Former Deputy Mayor of Shimla and currently a member of the Kerala Urban Commission

Metro: not a mobility solution

India's obsession with metros is relatively new but powerful. Over the past 15 years, metros have consumed nearly 40% of all urban development funds, becoming the single largest item in the urban budget. And yet, their contribution to mobility remains surprisingly limited. In most metro cities, only 5-12% of daily trips are made on the metro. The overwhelming majority of people still walk, cycle, or take buses and small para-transit modes.

This gap arises from the mismatch between metro systems and the pattern of everyday mobility in India. Nearly 90% of India's urban workforce is informal, and the average daily commute for most workers is just 4-5 kilometres. These are short, dense journeys. They do not require high-speed, capital-intensive corridors designed for long-distance travel. Metros therefore do not serve the functional needs of the majority; they serve the elite imagination of a "world-class" city.

Tamil Nadu is one of India's most urbanised States. The middle class is rapidly rising and so is an aspiring elite. With this comes a new visual language of development: gleaming airports, skywalks, elevated corridors and, invariably, metro lines. But elite desire is not a substitute for public need. Globally, cities comparable to Madurai or Coimbatore – medium-density, mixed-use, and compact – do not rely on metro systems. The successful examples are buses, surface-level rapid transit, cycling highways, pedestrian-first planning, and integrated feeder systems.

Singapore and Dubai, the frequently cited models, are not comparable in scale, governance, land control, or economic structure. Their metros work because their entire urban systems are shaped around them. Indian cities cannot simply copy-paste such models.

Metros are also extremely expensive. A metro costs ₹300 crore-900 crore per kilometre, depending on whether it is elevated or underground. Operating costs are equally steep. Almost no Indian metro recovers its costs through fares. Massive public subsidies keep them afloat. For cities like Coimbatore and Madurai, metro systems would mean decades of financial strain – diverting scarce funds away from schools, water supply, local roads, housing, public health, and basic neighbourhood infrastructure. To interpret the lack of metro allocation as a lack of development is to miss the real opportunity: freedom from a financially draining model.

Madurai's radial street system and Coimbatore's industrial neighbourhood clusters are inherently walkable and compact. The majority of workers move within short neighbourhood loops. Imposing metro systems onto such cities disrupts their organic form. What they need instead is a high-frequency electric buses, dedicated bus lanes on major corridors, shaded pedestrian networks, protected cycle tracks, better-integrated autos and share mobility, and neighbourhood-level last-mile systems. These are quick to build, cheaper, and beneficial.

> Modern mobility is not defined by infrastructure scale, but by access, affordability, and last-mile quality

Cities that redefined urban mobility in the last 30 years– Curitiba, Bogotá, Copenhagen, Freiburg, Medellín – did not rely on metros alone. Many, in fact, did not build metros at all. They invested in Bus Rapid Transit that moves more people per rupee than any metro; cycling superhighways; walkable neighbourhoods; hill connectivity via ropeways; multimodal integration rather than a single grand system. Modern mobility should not be defined by the scale of infrastructure, but by access, affordability, and last-mile connectivity and quality. India's own mobility patterns mirror these best practices far more than the metro-dominated model.

Tamil Nadu's opportunity

Mr. Stalin's disappointment at being denied metro projects for Madurai and Coimbatore is understandable from a political point of view. But it also inadvertently gives Tamil Nadu a an opportunity to reimagine Coimbatore with a grid of fast, frequent electric buses, connected to industrial clusters; Madurai with pedestrian-first temple circuits, cycle highways, and seamlessly integrated shared autos; and cities where neighbourhoods are built as 15-minute communities, where work, school, healthcare, and markets lie within short walking or cycling distance. These constitute modern, climate-sensitive, affordable, and socially inclusive infrastructure. They match how people actually move. And most important, they won't bankrupt cities.

Tamil Nadu must resist the pressure of equating development and modernity with metros. Instead, it should craft mobility systems that reflect the realities of its workers, the densities of its neighbourhoods, and the constraints of its municipal finances. If Tamil Nadu dares to think beyond the metro, it could set a new template for the rest of the country.

Bihar's unrealised potential

Its infrastructure story and women's empowerment narrative are under strain

STATE OF PLAY

M.R. Sharan
Munish Sharma

Last month, Nitish Kumar returned as Chief Minister of Bihar after the National Democratic Alliance swept the Assembly elections. Two explanations have featured prominently in much of the commentary by analysts: the State's improvements in basic infrastructure such as roads, piped water, drains, electricity; and women's empowerment through self-help groups, cycles for girls, and reservations in panchayats, police and State-level jobs. While both these narratives have merit, Bihar's infrastructure gains and some elements of its record on women's empowerment have been under quiet strain.

Take piped water and drains. During the first phase of Saat Nischay (Seven Resolves), rural tap water access increased from negligible levels in 2011 to nearly 30% of households and over 60% of villages by 2020. There were similar leaps in drainage and other small civic works. This transformation hinged on Panchayati Raj institutions: not just the mukhiyas, who head the Gram Panchayats, but also the 1.1 lakh ward members who directly implemented these projects.

Understanding Bihar's local government structure is key to grasping why this decentralisation was so remarkable. Its panchayats are large – an average Gram Panchayat covers approximately 12,000 people, around four times the national average. Historically, whatever powers were devolved were concentrated in the mukhiya. In 2016, Bihar made a radical departure

from this model: the responsibility for implementing the Nal-Jal (piped water) and Naali-Gali (drains and lanes) schemes was handed over to ward members. Each ward – with a population of roughly 1,000 and a directly elected representative – received about ₹20 lakh to implement works.

Many ward members were political novices. Severe land constraints meant locating sites for tanks and drains often produced local disputes. Yet, they persevered. Their incentives were hyper-local: more than any other elected representative, ward members live among, and are in close contact with, their constituents. A direct consequence of this devolution was a change in where people chose to contest elections: between the 2016 and 2021, ward candidates nearly doubled, while competition for the mukhiya post declined by about 20%.

This decentralised model was abruptly dismantled in May 2023, when a rule change stripped ward members of all financial authority. Citing concerns about corruption, maintenance and implementation of tap-water projects were handed to the Public Health Engineering Department, whose unelected officials have no local presence in Gram Panchayats. Thousands of ward bank accounts now lie dormant, and ward members are frustrated.

These moves have direct consequences: expansion of piped water connections has stalled. Even mukhiyas, who now have the final word on drain constructions, complain of reduced autonomy under tighter bureaucratic control. This pattern extends to other public goods and services such as waste collection, solar and street lighting.

If the infrastructure story is fragile, so too is the women's empowerment narrative. Bihar was neither the pioneer nor is it unique in adopting 50% reservation in panchayats for women. Research suggests that many women representatives still operate as proxies for their husbands. More important, substantive empowerment requires strengthening the more than 55,000 women ward members who form the backbone of local governance – precisely the actors whose financial authority has been removed.

Jeevika, Bihar's self-help group movement, remains a success. But entrepreneurship cannot be catalysed through one-time transfers such as the Mukhyamantri Mahila Rozgar Yojana. The scheme cost roughly ₹15,600 crore – resources unavailable for health, education, or the physical infrastructure Bihar needs. Also, an over-reliance on direct transfers weakens the chain of accountability between citizens and their elected representatives. When higher tiers of the State bypass panchayats and send money directly to citizens, local democracy is hollowed out.

Bihar's greatest resource is its unrealised potential. Much of it can be unlocked ground-up.

M.R. Sharan is Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland, College Park; Munish Sharma leads GRAMA, a policy initiative based out of Patna

Venezuela's resource curse

Despite having the world's most proven oil resources, the country has a strained economy

DATA POINT

Sambavi Parthasarathy

After announcing a naval blockade and seizing two oil tankers, the Donald Trump administration has now ordered U.S. military forces to focus on enforcing a 'quarantine' of Venezuelan oil for at least the next two months, amping up economic pressure on Caracas. The impact of this imperialist step could worsen the already weak Venezuelan economy. But how did a petrostate with the most proven resources end up with a strained economy in the first place?

Venezuela has the largest proven reserves of crude oil in the world at 303 billion barrels (2023). Yet, it ranks much lower in the production and refining of oil. Most of its resources are extra-heavy crude oil, whose extraction and processing require specialised technology and refineries. However, internal issues and international sanctions have starved it of the capital required for this.

While the state-run oil company Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA) owns and operates five refineries in Venezuela, it also suffers from years of under investment, mismanagement, and a lack of technical expertise. Specifically, following a failed coup attempt in April 2002 and the subsequent general strike/oil lockout in December 2002-February 2003, the then President, Hugo Chavez, was forced to replace PDVSA's management. Critics say this led to a bureaucratisation of the company.

In 2024, the country produced 9,21,000 barrels of crude oil per day, at least 56% lower than its production in the 1980s. In the 1970s, Venezuela benefited when oil prices soared due to the Yom Kippur War, and its per capita income became the highest in Latin America. It was then a largely unequal country. However, the figure has only dwindled since 2014 following sanctions and the oil downturn **(Chart 2).** Venezuela's GDP per capita in recent years has become almost similar to what it was three decades ago. No other country's GDP per capita has slid to this extent in this period.

Consequently, despite being a founding member of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Venezuela has the highest general government gross debt compared to other OPEC members **(Chart 3)**. While others have steered through global oil price crashes, the country continues to reel under economic pressure. This points to the fact that the economic crisis in Venezuela cannot be attributed to global crude factors alone.

U.S. sanctions have played a major role in curbing the petroleum sector in Venezuela. The first Trump administration imposed sanctions in August 2017, prohibiting Caracas from accessing U.S. financial markets. It then imposed more sanctions in 2019, on PDVSA, preventing it from being paid for exports to the U.S. The sanctions also froze PDVSA's U.S. assets and disallowed the supply of diluents. There was some easing in 2023 under the Joe Biden regime, but sanctions were reinstated later, before the naval blockade imposed by the second Trump regime.

The slump can also partly be explained by the country's lack of diversification. While many other OPEC countries have diversified to non-oil exports, Venezuela has failed to do so. As seen in **Chart 4,** Venezuela has largely continued to rely on its mineral (oil) exports.

Despite Venezuela exporting mostly only oil, the country's share in global exports of oil fell drastically due to these internal and external factors. **Chart 5** shows the share of select countries' share in global exports of crude oil over time. Venezuela formed over 4% of the global oil exports in the 1990s, second only to Saudi Arabia's share. However, this dwindled to around 0.35% in 2023.

Unfulfilled potential

The data were sourced from the World Bank, the U.S. Energy Information Administration, OPEC reports and Harvard Atlas Lab

Table 1: Venezuela's rank among crude oil reserves (2023), crude oil production (2024) and refinery throughput (2024). B/D: barrels/day

Rank	Country	Reserves (in billion barrels)
1	Venezuela	303
2	Saudi Arabia	267
3	Iran	209
Rank	**Country**	**Production (1,000 B/D)**
1	U.S.	13,208
2	Russia	9,193
3	Saudi Arabia	8,955
..		
16	Venezuela	921
Rank	**Country**	**Refinery throughput (1,000 B/D)**
1	U.S.	16,623
2	China	14,250
3	Russia	5,347
..		
35	Venezuela	335

Venezuela has the largest proven reserves of crude oil in the world. Yet it ranks much lower when it comes to production and refining

Chart 2: Venezuela's GDP per capita since the 1980s. The figure is in PPP terms and current international $

GDP per capita has now almost become similar to what it was three decades ago

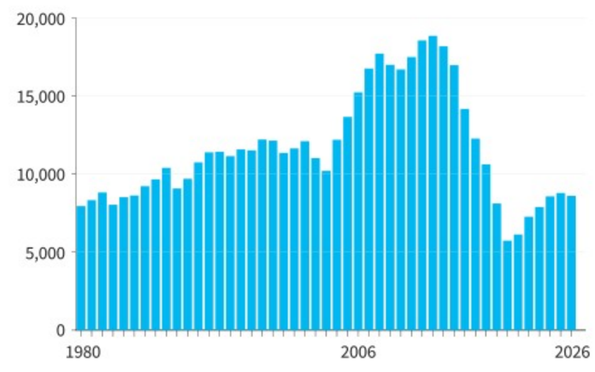


Chart 3: Gross government debt as a share of GDP (in %) for select OPEC countries

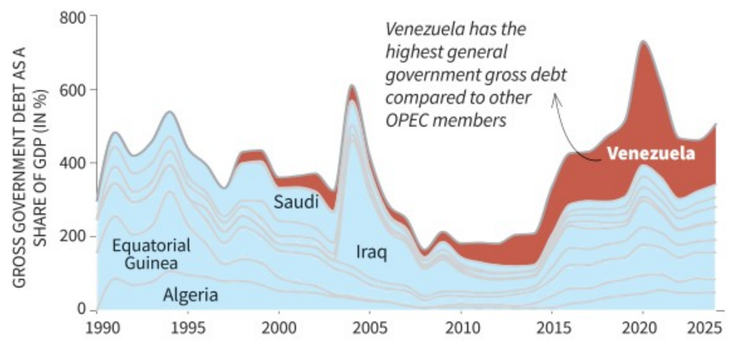


Chart 4: Venezuela's exports over time across different commodities. Figures in $ billion

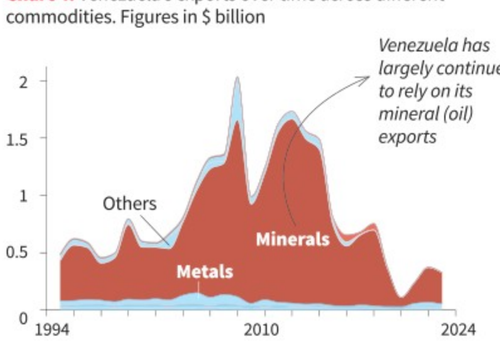


Chart 5: Select OPEC countries' share in global exports of crude oil over time. Figures in %

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 29, 1975

Time to encourage Indian literature in English

Madurai, Dec. 28: The three-day 26th All-India English Teachers Conference opened here to-day with a call for recognition of and encouragement to Indian literature in English and a "respectable place" for it in the undergraduate and postgraduate syllabi.

Prof. Shiv K. Kumar, Head of the Department of English, Osmania University, Hyderabad, in his presidential address, said Indian literature in English need no longer be disparaged as a "mere illegitimate child of British or American literature or treated with contempt."

He said Indian short story writers in English and poets and novelists had won acclaim from discerning Western critics for their creative handling of English and for their imaginative tendering of human experience. "The time has, therefore, come to offer their works a respectable place in our undergraduate and post-graduate syllabi. You may encourage your research scholars to spin out sophisticated dissertations on Keat's use of Miltonic inversions, or the archetypal imagery in Coleridge's early poetry, but you may find it equally rewarding to put them on to R.K. Narayan's use of the comic mode, or linguistic experimentation in contemporary Indian verse in English," he added.

Prof. Kumar was confident that English would stay in India as the only link language for quite some years to come and "may remain on the scene longer, however much we rail against it."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DECEMBER 29, 1925

Labour in coal mines

London, Dec. 29: Commenting on the 1924 report of the Chief Inspector of Indian Mines with special reference to the employment of women and the number of fatal accidents which reveal extraordinary callousness and neglect on the part of colliery managements, the Manchester Guardian says reports such as this should spur on the efforts of western nations who are trying through the International Labour Office to raise Labour standards in the new industrial countries in the east to a more decent level. The paper refers to India's efforts to stimulate coal exports and says there is little doubt about India's future as a coal producing country.

From Page One

EC halts Bengal voter hearings conditionally

Hearings for unmapped voters started in the State on Saturday and around 32 lakh have been identified as "unmapped" after first phase of hearing.

The letter by the ACEO states that the extract of the 2002 electoral roll may be sent to the DEO concerned for verification as per EC guidelines and after being verified by the DEOs, the ERO, or AERO "may take a call and upload the document for disposing the cases".

Field checks

"BLOs (Booth Level Officers) may be sent to the field [to] take a photo with such elector and the same may be uploaded. In cases where discrepancies are detected later on with the hard copy of 2002 Electoral Roll by ERO/AERO or on complaints, the concerned electors may be called for hearing after servicing notices," the communication by the ACEO stated.

Senior Trinamool leader and Minister Sashi Panja too questioned why senior citizens and people with disabilities were being "forcibly dragged" for physical attendance at SIR hearings, when during the 2024 Lok Sabha election, the EC itself had enabled home voting for voters above 85 and PwDs with 40% benchmark disability.

BLO found dead

In another development a Booth Level Officer (BLO) was found dead in West Bengal's Bankura district on Sunday. The death again triggered allegations of work-related pressure linked to the ongoing SIR exercise. Trinamool national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee alleged that over 50 lives have been lost "to panic, anxiety, exhaustion and fear engineered by a voter-cleansing operation designed for BJP's electoral gain".

Meanwhile, West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Manoj Agarwal has been provided Y-plus category cover of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF). There have been protests outside the CEO office in Kolkata for the past several days by a section of BLOs allegedly aligned with the Trinamool.

World is looking at India with great hope, says PM

In his *Mann Ki Baat* address, Modi highlights achievements of 2025, says youth can contribute to nation-building via platforms like Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue, Smart India Hackathon

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

From national security to the sports field, from science laboratories to the world's biggest platforms, India left a strong mark everywhere
NARENDRA MODI
Prime MInister

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said 2025 had been a year of proud achievements for India, with the country making its presence felt across sectors, inspiring citizens to look forward to 2026 with confidence.

"From national security to the sports field, from science laboratories to the world's biggest platforms, India left a strong mark everywhere," Mr. Modi said during the year-ending *Mann Ki Baat* episode.

Terming Operation Sindoor a symbol of pride, he said the world saw that India does not compromise on its security. "The same spirit was also visible when *Vande Mataram* completed 150 years," he added.

He highlighted achievements in sports, including victories in the men's ICC Champions Trophy, the women's Cricket World Cup, and the Women's Blind T20 World Cup, as well as successes in the Asia Cup T20 and the World Para Athletics Championships.

Shubhanshu Shukla became the first Indian to reach the International Space Station, he said. On environment conservation, the Prime Minister noted that the number of cheetahs in India had risen to over 30.

"In 2025, faith, culture, and heritage came together," he said, citing the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh and the flag-hoisting ceremony at the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, and noting the growing enthusiasm for *swadeshi* (self-reliance).

Stating that, today, the world was looking at India with great hope, especially owing to youth power in the areas of science, new innovations, and technology, Mr. Modi said the youth can contribute to nation-building via platforms like the 'Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue' and the 'Smart India Hackathon'.

This year, student participants in the hackathon worked on more than 270 problems of over 80 government departments, he said, and over 13 lakh students and about 6,000 institutes have participated in the event in the last seven to eight years.

The Prime Minister also spoke about a music class started at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) via research and innovation a few years ago, and now established as a cultural centre named 'Geetanjali IISc', where students together practise Hindustani classical music, folk traditions, and classical genres.

Indians living in different parts of the world were also making efforts to stay connected to their roots. In Dubai, Kannada families took the initiative to teach Kannada to children. "The land and language of Kannada are our pride," Mr. Modi said in Kannada.

The Prime Minister praised a young man from Manipur, Moirangthem Seth, for launching a campaign to install solar panels in remote areas, particularly health centres. Under the 'PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana', the government is providing ₹75,000 to ₹80,000 to each beneficiary family for installing solar panels.

Antibiotic use

He expressed concern over an Indian Council of Medical Research report that antibiotics are proving ineffective against many diseases such as pneumonia and urinary tract infection. He urged people to refrain from using medicines at their own discretion.

Mr. Modi highlighted the lace craft of Narasapuram in Andhra Pradesh, saying that the State government and NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) were jointly teaching artisans new designs, providing better skill training, and connecting them with new markets.

Nation is witnessing next-generation reforms, says Modi

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The PM says youth development plays a key role to achieve the vision of a developed India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday addressed the Conference of Chief Secretaries, with this year's deliberations centred on the theme "Human capital for Viksit Bharat".

Emphasising the need for collective action, the Prime Minister said empowering India's people, especially the youth, was key to achieving the vision of a developed nation. Noting that India is witnessing a phase of next-generation reforms, Mr. Modi said the country had "boarded the Reform Express", with its primary engine being India's demographic strength.

Empowering this demography, he said, remains central to the government's efforts towards building an Aatmanirbhar Bharat and uplifting the poor.

The Prime Minister underlined the importance of quality across sectors, calling for quality in governance, service delivery and manufacturing. He stressed that the 'Made in India' label must become synonymous with global standards, while reaffirming the commitment to the principle of 'Zero Defect, Zero Effect'. Mr. Modi also highlighted steps taken to foster a new work culture in governance and public service delivery, pointing to the role of technology in bringing positive changes to citizens' lives. Discussions during the conference covered a wide range of issues, including skill development, higher education, youth empowerment and sports.

Calling upon the States to play a proactive role, the Prime Minister urged them to encourage manufacturing, improve the ease of doing business and strengthen the services sector. He said India should aim to emerge as a global services hub.

On agriculture, Mr. Modi said India had the potential to become the world's food basket.

He advocated a shift towards high-value agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, dairying and fisheries, asserting that these sectors could help position India as a major food exporter.

India deny Bangladesh claims on Hadi's killers

Mourners attend the funeral of Sharif Osman Hadi in Dhaka on December 20. AFP

India's Ministry of External Affairs had, on Friday, said the "unremitting hostilities" against minorities in Bangladesh area matter of " grave concern".

Regarding the alleged killers of Hadi, Mr. Islam said that: "According to our information, the suspects entered India via the Haluaghat border. After crossing, they were initially received by an individual named Purti. Later, a taxi driver named Sami transported them to Tura city in Meghalaya".

He said Purti and Sami had been detained by the authorities in Meghalaya.

The killing of Hadi, a popular figure who was one of the major mobilisers of the July-August 2024 uprising against deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina that ended in her ouster, triggered law and order problem and heightened inter-community tension in Bangladesh.

(With inputs from Rahul Karmakar and PTI)

President undertakes dive sortie in submarine, calls it a very special experience

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu aboard the submarine *INS Vaghsheer* at the Karwar Naval Harbour in Karnataka on Sunday. PTI

President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday undertook a dive sortie aboard the Indian Navy's submarine *INS Vaghsheer* on the western seaboard.

Ms. Murmu was accompanied by the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi, during the sortie, according to the President's Secretariat.

She embarked on the indigenous Kalvari-class submarine at the Karwar Naval Harbour in Karnataka.

During the sortie, which lasted over two hours, Ms. Murmu interacted with officers and sailors of the submarine, and witnessed operational demonstrations, including complex manoeuvres and multiple successful firings.

"This maiden embarkation onboard an indigenous Kalvari-class submarine reflects the continued engagement of the Supreme Commander with the armed forces in operational settings," the President's Secretariat said.

With this embarkation, Ms. Murmu became only the second President of India to undertake a sortie aboard a submarine after the late A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

It was also her maiden embarkation on an indigenous Kalvari-class submarine, underlining India's growing self-reliance in defence manufacturing.

In a note penned in the visitors' book, the President described the experience as very special. "It was indeed a very special experience for me to sail, dive and spend time with our sailors and officers onboard *INS Vaghsheer*. The multiple successful firings and challenging operations carried out by *INS Vaghsheer* demonstrate the crew's exceptional preparedness and dedication, in accordance with its motto '*Veerta Varchasva Vijaya*' [courage, supremacy, victory]," Ms. Murmu said.

Witnessing the discipline and confidence and enthusiasm of the crew reassured her of the Indian Navy's readiness to counter any threat under all circumstances, she said.

Protests continue against bail to Unnao case convict; SC to hear CBI's plea today

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Activists protest at Jantar Mantar seeking justice for the Unnao rape victim in New Delhi on Sunday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Protests against the bail granted to former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA and Unnao rape case convict Kuldeep Singh Sengar continued in Delhi on Sunday. A heated exchange broke out between the demonstrators and a woman who had arrived to express support for Sengar, outside the Jantar Mantar here.

The protesters, who gathered amid heavy police deployment, demanded the cancellation of Sengar's bail. The survivor and her mother, along with social activist Yogita Bhayana and several supporters, were present at the site. Similar protests were also staged by the Mumbai Youth Congress, which said the suspension of Sengar's life sentence contradicted the BJP's slogan of "*Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* (save the girl child, educate the girld child)".

On December 23, the Delhi High Court suspended Sengar's life sentence in the 2017 Unnao rape case, stating that he had already served seven years and five months in prison. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) challenged the High Court's order in the Supreme Court on December 26. The plea is scheduled to be heard on Monday.

Reacting to the developments, the survivor said she was hopeful of justice from the Supreme Court. "He killed my father and another family member. The security provided to my family and witnesses was withdrawn. My husband lost his job and my children are unsafe at home," she said.

Responding to a woman who had come to the protest site on Sunday with a placard that said "I support Kuldeep Sengar", Ms. Bhayana said that women should know that most perpetrators of sexual violence against women are men. "In 97% of the cases, the perpetrators are men. There are only a few women who have been charged in such cases. In such a scenario, is it justified to support a convicted rapist?" she asked.

FIR filed for assault on Muslim student by right-wing group

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Video of the incident went viral on social media in which activists were seen storming the cafe

After a group of Hindu right-wing activists stormed a restaurant in Bareilly and attacked students doing birthday celebration alleging love jihad, the local police on Sunday registered a first information report (FIR) against the accused amid a social media uproar.

"The police registered FIR against Rishabh Thakur, Deepak Pathak and 20-25 others for assault in a restaurant located at Premnagar police station on December 27. We are identifying the people involved in the assault," said Ashutosh Shivam, Circle Officer City 1, Bareilly. Videos of the incident went viral in which a group of activists were seen storming the cafe, and the police earlier acted against the victim, two Muslim youths and the cafe staff by issuing challan for disturbing peace on December 27. The issuing of challan led to an uproar. The issues relate to a first-year B.Sc. nursing student who hosted her birthday party at the restaurant in the Prem Nagar area that was attended by nine friends – five women and four men. Of the four male friends two were Muslims. The presence of Muslim youth with a Hindu woman led some members of the fringe group to reach the restaurant, where they raised slogans, and attacked them. The police reached the spot and took the student and others to the police station for questioning.

Nearly 2.89 crore names deleted from draft voter list in U.P.

Press Trust of India
LUCKNOW

The draft electoral roll in Uttar Pradesh, which will be published on December 31, is likely to have the names of about 12.55 crore voters, with almost 2.89 crore names deleted from the pre-SIR voter list, the State's Chief Electoral Officer said on Sunday.

Among the 12.55 crore voters who have made it to the draft list, more than one crore are in the "unmapped" category, meaning notices will be sent out to them to furnish self-attested documents from among the list of the 12 mandated by the Election Commission to be moved into the "mapped" category, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Navdeep Rinwa said.

"Starting January 1, the EC will roll out a month-long process during which any of the nearly 2.89 crore voters, 2,88,75,000 to be precise, whose names have been deleted for various reasons and want to contest the action can reapply by filling out Form 6," Mr. Rinwa said.

Gangster dies of gunshot wounds in Uttarakhand

Press Trust of India
HARIDWAR

Gangster Vinay Tyagi died of bullet wounds here on Saturday three days after he was shot at while being taken to a court by the police, authorities said. His family accused the police of being complicit in his killing and demanded a CBI inquiry into the death.

Tyagi was shot when two bikers opened fire on a police vehicle taking him from Roorkee jail to Laksar court near the Laksar flyover, the police said.

Families displaced by 1973 Sabarmati flood get land ownership

Abhinay Deshpande
AHMEDABAD

Five decades after families displaced by the 1973 Sabarmati floods lost their homes and land, the long-pending issue of ownership was resolved on Sunday as Union Home Minister Amit Shah distributed land ownership certificates to rehabilitated residents of Nava Vanzar village and inaugurated civic projects worth ₹330 crore in Ahmedabad.

The programme, organised by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation in Gandhinagar in the presence of Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, also marked the inauguration of the Western Trunk Main Line project, a major drainage initiative.

Calling the event "small but extremely important", Mr. Shah said citizens who lost everything in the floods had finally received legal ownership of their plots after 50 years. "In a large city like Ahmedabad, 173 beneficiaries may appear to be a small number, but for them this moment is historic," he said.

Congress has not compromised on its core principles: Kharge

Congress president hits out at party's critics, says it has never politicised religion and divided people; speaking at its 140th Foundation Day, Kharge says the Congress is not merely an organisation but also an ideology and 'ideologies never die'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Marking the 140th Foundation Day of the Indian National Congress, party president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday said the Opposition party was not merely an organisation but an ideology and "ideologies never die".

Addressing leaders and workers at the party's Indira Bhavan headquarters, Mr. Kharge said that while the Congress might not be in power, it had not compromised on its core principles.

"Our power may be less, but our spine is still straight. We have not compromised with the Constitution, secularism or the rights of the poor. We may not be in power, but we will not bargain," he said.

His remarks come a day after senior party leader Digvijaya Singh had praised the organisational strength of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, and questioned certain weaknesses within the Congress.

Celebrating history: Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge and Sonia Gandhi during the event in Delhi on Sunday marking the 140th Foundation Day of the Indian National Congress. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Though he did not refer to Mr. Singh, the Congress chief's speech was clearly aimed at silencing critics of the party. He emphasised the party's secular credentials, and said the Congress had never sought votes in the name of religion nor spread hatred through temple-mosque politics.

"The Congress unites, the BJP divides. For us, religion has always been a matter of faith, not politics. Today the BJP has power, but not the truth," he alleged, accusing the ruling party of suppressing data, halting the Census, and trying to change the Constitution.

Taking a swipe at the BJP's claims over history, Mr. Kharge said that those lecturing the nation on history today belonged to traditions that once "fled from history".

Senior leaders including Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, K.C. Venugopal, and Ajay Maken were present on the occasion. Photos of Shashi Tharoor and Digvijaya Singh, both leaders whose public positions are often at variance with the party stance, went viral on social media. Party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra was not present.

In his speech, Mr. Kharge highlighted several historic milestones, noting that 2025 marked the centenary of Mahatma Gandhi becoming Congress president, the 75th year of the adoption of the Constitution, and the 150th anniversary of *Vande Mataram*.

He added that 2026 would commemorate the 200th birth anniversary of Dadabhai Naoroji, the centenary of Sarojini Naidu's Congress presidency, and 100 years of the patriotic song *Jhanda Uncha Rahe Hamara*, first sung at the 1925 Kanpur Congress session.

On the journey of India's democracy, Mr. Kharge said many nations that gained freedom alongside India had failed or slipped into dictatorship. "India alone remains a vibrant democracy, and this is because of the great leaders of the Congress," he said.

Describing the party's legacy, he said its 140-year history embodies "truth, non-violence, sacrifice, struggle and patriotism."

Congress leaders react to Digvijaya Singh's remarks, speak in different voices

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Reactions continued from within the Congress on Sunday after senior leader Digvijaya Singh lauded the organisational power of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh ahead of the Congress Working Committee meet held on Saturday, with some supporting the view that the party's organisational strength had to be bolstered, and others dismissing it.

"The [Congress's] organisation should be strengthened, there is no doubt," Thiruvananthapuram MP Shashi Tharoor, who was seated next to Mr. Singh during a ceremony to mark the party's 140th foundation day on Sunday, later said, adding, "But Digvijaya Singh can speak for himself."

Meanwhile, Manickam Tagore, Congress MP from Tamil Nadu, said that the party's organisation, "based on love", could not be compared with that of others. "The RSS is an organisation which is based on hate, breeds hate and propagates hate, you cannot compare [the Congress] with such an organisation", he said.

> The RSS is an organisation which is based on hate, breeds hate, and propagates hate, you cannot compare [the Congress] with such an organisation
>
> **MANICKAM TAGORE**
> Congress MP

"The Al Qaeda is also an organisation, and is based on hate and violence. Therefore, organisations may exist but the structures they are based on are different," Mr. Tagore said. When asked to clarify whether he was comparing the RSS to Al Qaeda, he said, "All I am saying is that the RSS is based on hate, the Al Qaeda is based on hate."

'Learning from Cong.'

Former Union Minister Salman Khurshid said that there were many things that others needed to learn from the Congress. "We have a lot in the Congress, and others should learn from the Congress instead. We certainly don't need to learn from the RSS as we oppose that ideology," Mr. Khurshid said.

He also raised the issue of strengthening the Congress's organisation at the grassroots level, asserting it was much needed in the fight against the ruling BJP, and to oust it from power.

A day later, Mr. Singh said he had already stated whatever he had to say.

"I have basic differences and am opposed to their [the RSS's] ideology. I have and will continue to fight against such people," he added. "Every organisation needs strengthening. The Congress is a movement-based party, but perhaps we fall short on converting movements to votes," he said.

Minister urges Sonia to return letters of Nehru to Prime Ministers' Museum

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Union Minister of Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Sunday urged former Congress president Sonia Gandhi to return the correspondence and documents of the first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, to the Prime Ministers' Museum and Library, stating that they belonged to the country and not to any individual.

The Minister said, "The Prime Ministers' Museum and Library (PMML), which was formerly the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), was established after the death of Jawaharlal Nehru. A society was created (to manage the museum), but it did not function properly. Subsequently, the NMML was renamed as PMML (in 2023)."

Gajendra Singh Shekhawat

He said that over 20 years, from 1970 to 1990, all non-official documents related to Nehru were brought to the museum, including letters Nehru wrote to people, the replies received, and his personal comments and notes. "Similar documents of all the Prime Ministers are preserved at the museum. There are about 2.5 crore such documents. Of them, 4 lakh are related to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru alone," Mr. Shekhawat said.

While documents of other Prime Ministers are the permanent property and heritage of the museum, it has been written that Nehru's documents were not given to the museum as a loan or gift, but for safe custody, Mr. Shekhawat stated.

Cong. leader's request

He said that on April 29, 2008, on the instructions of Sonia Gandhi, her representative M.V. Rajan wrote a letter requesting that she wished to take back all the private family letters and notes of Nehru.

Subsequently, it was decided that since these were kept in the museum for safe custody, whichever letters the family wanted should be returned to them. Hence, around 57 cartons containing around 26,000 documents were taken away from the museum.

"We have sought their return. Sonia Gandhi has said that she will look into the matter. Because, naturally, these ministerial documents cannot be the personal property of any individual. We have written two letters to her; we once again urge that they be returned," he said.

On the digitisation initiatives, he said, "About a year-and-a-half ago, we started a digitisation mission at the National Archives. We digitised millions of files and secured them."

J&K students' quota stir cancelled; leaders placed under house arrest

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

Students from the open merit category in Kashmir on Sunday cancelled a sit-in protest in Srinagar over "unfair reservation quota".

The decision came after several political leaders, including National Conference's Aga Syed Ruhullah, Peoples Democratic Party's Waheed-ur-Rehmaan Parra, and Iltija Mufti, were allegedly placed under house arrest and student leaders were detained.

A spokesperson for the Open Merit Students Association J&K, one of the organisations championing the cause of the open merit aspirants, in a post on X, announced that the sit-in has been cancelled.

"Today' sit-in cum meet-up on the unfair reservation policy stands cancelled due to circumstances beyond our control. We urge all students to remain calm. Students are advised to return safely to their hostels, libraries, or homes," he said.

Strict vigil: Security personnel deployed at Polo View in Srinagar on Sunday in the wake of the students' protest. IMRAN NISSAR

A student leader, under the condition of anonymity, said many student activists were taken into preventive detention or directed not to organise any protest since Saturday evening. He said, "The venue in Srinagar's Polo View area was also closed with concertina wires by the security forces."

Meanwhile, Mr. Ruhullah, Mr. Parra and Ms. Mufti accused the J&K Police of placing them under house arrest in Srinagar, in a bid to stop them from joining the protesting students.

"Instead of fixing a deeply unjust reservation policy, the government is crushing voices exposing how open merit students' hard work, merit, careers and futures are being destroyed," a PDP spokesperson said.

Referring to the move, NC president Farooq Abdullah said, "Ask those leaders what exactly they wanted to achieve (by protests). We are making every possible effort for progress, stability and development but some people want chaos. We will not allow that."

Meanwhile, the J&K Students Association said the government should "prioritise dialogue over discord".

Many permanently shifted, untraceable voters in Matua-dominated seats: study

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

An analysis of the deletion of names of voters in the Assembly constituencies with a majority of Matua population in West Bengal reveals a high number of permanently shifted and untraceable voters during the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

The analysis of about 15 Matua-dominated constituencies by the Kolkata-based Sabar Institute pointed out that an average 33.95% deleted voters have been described as those who have permanently shifted. The average number of untraceable/ absent voters across these 15 constituencies stands at 21.56%. These 15 constituencies are located in North 24 Parganas and Nadia districts.

Highest deletions

The highest percentage of deletions on account of untraceable/absent voters is from the Krishnaganj constituency in Nadia with 42.11% deletions. This was followed by Ranaghat Uttar Purba with 34.56% deletions on account of untraceable/absent voters in the same district.

The highest percentage of deletions on account of permanently shifted voters was recorded in Bangaon Dakshin constituency with 41.76% deletions. This was followed by 38.46% deletions in Swarupnagar on account of permanently shifted voters. Both these constituencies are located in North 24 Parganas.

Sabir Ahamed of the Sabar Institute said the collaborative evidence-based analysis of the SIR exercise in West Bengal was done by Ashin Chakraborty and Souptik Halder.

Mr. Ahamed pointed out that the dominant political narrative portrayed in West Bengal was that electoral rolls were being filled with Rohingya and Bangladeshi names. However, our study reveals a completely different reality. "Matuas are vulnerable social groups, and despite residing here for years, remain excluded from the rolls. The political promise of granting them citizenship continues to be elusive," he added. Mr. Chakraborty said the Matua community was one of the most affected groups in the SIR process. "In constituencies such as Krishnaganj, 'untraceable/absent' has become the main reason for voter deletion, which is uncommon in most parts of the State. This is a serious issue and needs urgent attention, especially because the Matua community is already socially and economically marginalised," Mr. Chakraborty said.

Closer look: The Kolkata-based Sabar Institute analysed about 15 Matua-dominated Assembly constituencies in West Bengal. PTI

Surname analysis

The researchers have also held a surname analysis in the Matua belt across these 15 constituencies which point out that people with Biswas surname have accounted for the highest 20.79% deletions. This is followed by persons with Mondal surname with 17.83% deletions and Das surname with 10.78% deletions. All the three surnames are used by the Matua population.

Matuas are a social group largely comprising Namashudras who have migrated from Bangladesh over the past several decades. The community of Hindu refugees largely residing in North 24 Parganas and Nadia district have been apprehensive of the SIR since they lack legacy data. The SIR fears have over the past few weeks have prompted the Matuas to apply for citizenship under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019.

Matuas population has been adversely affected with SIR deletions that is evident from Bharatiya Janata Party MP and Matua leader Shantanu Thakur's recent remarks, which drew criticism from his political opponents. "If 50 lakh Rohingya, Bangladeshi Muslims, and Pakistani Muslims are removed in SIR, while one lakh of our own people are required to stop voting for a while, where are we gaining more?" Mr. Thakur said at a BJP event in Hanskhali-Garapota of West Bengal on Monday.

Now reading:
Journalists chasing the truth, not the algorithm.
Since 1878

Written by
JOURNALISTS
Print | Web | App
A BG-BGE

INBRIEF

8 wagons of goods train derail in Bihar's Jamui; no casualties

Eight wagons of a goods train derailed in Bihar's Jamui district on Saturday night causing disruption of railway service on the Howrah-Patna-Delhi route. However, no casualties were reported, a railway official said. The derailment affected many passenger trains passing through the Danapur division of East Central Railway. Eleven trains were cancelled, while over a dozen were diverted. Some have been short-terminated while others have been rescheduled. Trains such as New Delhi-Howrah Rajdhani (12306), Amritsar-Howrah Mail (13006), and Prayagraj Rambagh-Howrah Express (12334) are using alternative routes.

Shah says India will be free of malaria in a short time

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said India has recorded a 97% reduction in malaria cases and the country will be free of the disease in a "short time". He was addressing the 'All India Medical Conference – IMA NATCON 2025' of the Indian Medical Association in Ahmedabad. "Thanks to various healthcare related schemes like Ayushman Bharat and Mission Indradhanush, we have recorded 97% reduction in malaria cases and we will be almost free from malaria in a short time. The government has been able to bring down mortality rate in dengue to just 1%. There has been a 25% reduction in maternal mortality," he said. PTI

Mobile Internet services restored in Assam districts

Mobile Internet services in violence-hit Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts of Assam were restored on Sunday following an improvement in the law and order situation. However, strict security vigil continued, along with the deployment of additional security forces in the worst-affected areas, an official said. Two persons were killed and over 170 people sustained injuries, mostly security personnel, in violence in parts of West Karbi Anglong last week. An order by Ajay Tewari, Additional Chief Secretary of Home and Political Department, said Internet services, which had been suspended on December 23, have been restored. PTI

Congress, VBA seals alliance for Mumbai civic elections

Congress Maharashtra president Harshvardhan Sapkal and Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) leader Dhairyavardhan Pundkar on Sunday announced an alliance for the upcoming Mumbai municipal corporation elections, stating that the two parties will jointly contest 62 of the 227 seats. Calling the alliance "natural", Mr. Sapkal said, "Both parties are constitutionalists, their idea is to create an India that reflects the Constitution..." This comes after the Congress decided not to be part of the Opposition *Maha Vikas Aghadi* (MVA) following the coming together of the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena and the Raj Thackeray-led Maharashtra Navnirman Sena for the civic elections.

Documentary filmmaker S. Krishnaswamy passes away

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

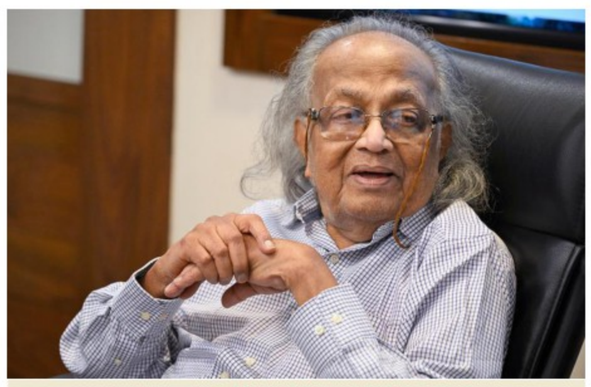
Internationally acclaimed documentary and television filmmaker S. Krishnaswamy, who produced over 900 non-fiction films, including the famed *Indus Valley to Indira Gandhi*, passed away on Sunday evening at a hospital in Chennai. He was 88.

He had been under treatment for a heart ailment and visited the hospital in the evening, said his daughter Gita Krishnaraj. He is survived by his wife Mohana Krishnaswamy and children Latha Krishna, Gita Krishnaraj, and Bharat Krishna.

Born in Chennai (at the time, Madras) on July 15, 1937, to iconic film director K. Subrahmanyam and lyricist Meenakshi Subrahmanyam, he joined Columbia University in the U.S. in 1960 and studied mass communications with a special reference to documentary films. He founded his firm Krishnaswamy Associates in 1963.

His magnum opus, *Indus Valley to Indira Gandhi*, a four-hour film traversing 5,000 years of subcontinental history, was released in December 1976. It was shot in 100 locations across the country and the rights for its international distribution were bought by Warner Brothers.

Among his works were *Unknown Freedom Fighters* (1978); *Rajaji* (1979); *Kamaraj* (1981); *With Apologies to Tagore* (1987), a five-minute, hilarious portrayal of the state of the nation with animation; *Jaya Jaya Sankara* (1991), a film on the Kanchi Math; and *Reality Behind Religion* (1992), which emphasised the need for brotherhood and understanding among the followers of various religions.



S. KRISHNASWAMY (1937-2025)

His films covering political leaders included those on R. Venkataraman and C. Subramaniam, both released in 2002, and M.G. Ramachandran in 1984. In the 1980s, he made films on the complex problems of Punjab and Sri Lanka, highlighting the operations of the Indian defence forces. The subject of electoral reforms did not escape his imagination, which was reflected in *Who loses when India wins* (2006).

His magnum opus *Indus Valley to Indira Gandhi* was shot in 100 locations across the country

Awards received

In 2009, he received the Padma Shri and in 2020, the Dr. V. Shantaram Lifetime Achievement Award for his contribution to documentary films at the Mumbai International Film Festival.

He also won the Honor Summus Award of the Watumull Foundation, Hawaii, in 1987 and the Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005 at the U.S. International Film and Video Festival, Los Angeles.

He authored several books, including one brought out by *The Hindu* titled *Voyages Retraced: India's Influence in East Asia* in February 2025. The book gave an insight into ancient India's impact on Southeast Asian countries, and a phase in history when Indian sailors travelled to countries such as Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand, and became conduits for spreading Indian culture, architecture, and fine arts to these countries over centuries. It was a narrative of his travels between 2005 and 2010.

He co-authored the book *Indian Film* with Erik Barnouw.

During the writing of the book, the authors camped in Darjeeling where Satyajit Ray was filming his *Kanchenjunga*.

Civil Aviation Ministry sets up new 24x7 control room for passengers

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

To address air travellers' grievances more promptly, the Civil Aviation Ministry has set up the Passenger Assistance Control Room (PACR) that functions round-the-clock to resolve issues.

Officials from the Ministry, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), airlines and Airports Authority of India (AAI) are among those working at the centre, which monitors operations, attends to passenger calls and coordinates real-time assistance.

The PACR or the control room was operationalised on December 10 in the wake of the operational disruptions at IndiGo. Besides, there have been flight disruptions and delays due to fog and other issues. Elaborating on the control room, Civil Aviation Secretary Samir Kumar Sinha said there has been a marked improvement in grievance redressal and there has been a positive response from air passengers and other stakeholders.

According to the Ministry, air travellers' grievances raised through various channels are being addressed through the PACR in the national capital, allowing timely resolution through close coordination with airline representatives.

Airlines must enforce regulations without delay, cautions DGCA

In circular to stakeholders, regulator flags potential risks to aviation safety due to 'lack of requisite level of preparedness' in complying with guidelines

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has warned that lack of preparedness among airline operators in complying with guidelines issued by the regulator from time to time poses potential risks to aviation safety.

The DGCA periodically issues operating regulations to ensure flight safety, operational efficiency and overall aviation safety through Civil Aviation Requirements (CARs), Aeronautical Information Circulars (AICs) and other notifications.

Compliance with these regulations by operators is mandatory.

In a safety circular issued to all stakeholders, the DGCA stressed that proper and effective compliance with regulatory requirements could be achieved only through advance preparation.

Calling out delays: Stakeholders have been instructed to closely monitor the implementation of Civil Aviation Requirements, Aeronautical Information Circulars and other directives. ANI

Lack of preparedness

"It has been noticed that there is a lack of the requisite level of preparedness to ensure timely and effective implementation of regulations issued by the DGCA. This has resulted in potential risks to aviation safety and inconvenience to passengers," the circular said.

Highlighting the importance of adequate planning, the regulator advised all stakeholders to devise a detailed implementation strategy well in advance of the effective date of any new operating regulation. The strategy should factor in both available resources and additional requirements, if any, it said.

Timely availability

Airline operators and other stakeholders were directed to ensure the timely availability of all resources and verify their functionality.

"Wherever necessary, functionality trials or dry runs shall be completed well ahead of implementation," the DGCA said.

The regulator has also sought submission of implementation plans, along with data and results of dry runs, prior to the actual date of enforcement of the regulations.

Stakeholders have been instructed to closely monitor the implementation of CARs, AICs and other directives for a period of six months and submit periodic reports to the DGCA.

Red Fort blast: many victims, kin yet to get govt. compensation

Shrimansi Kaushik
NEW DELHI

More than a month after the Red Fort blast, several victims and their families are yet to receive the ex gratia compensation announced by the Delhi government. Many among the deceased and those seriously injured were sole breadwinners and their families are struggling to make ends meet now.

The Delhi government had announced an ex gratia compensation of ₹10 lakh each for the families of those killed, ₹5 lakh for victims with permanent disability, ₹2 lakh for those with serious injuries, and ₹20,000 for victims with minor injuries.

However, many have not received any compensation from the government. Among the deceased was Nouman Ansari, 18, from Shamli in Uttar Pradesh, who was in the city on the fateful day to buy products for his cosmetics shop back home. His family said he had dropped out of his studies to support them and was the only earning member with his elder brother suffering from kidney ailments.

"After we submitted all documents with the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) in Delhi, we were asked to wait. After a week, we were told the SDM will be transferred and all the formalities will be done after that. Then we were told they were coordinating with the Uttar Pradesh government and our local police here but even after all the paperwork, we have not received anything so far," he said.

A similar story was shared by Aneesh Pathak, the eldest son of Vinay Pathak, a 50-year-old priest who died in the blast. He said the family submitted all required documents at the SDM office and was assured that the compensation would be released soon. "But we have not received anything so far," he said.

Saina Parveen, 23, suffered temporary hearing loss in the blast. She received treatment and also got support from her employers, a private company in Karol Bagh, but was fired abruptly.

Ms. Parveen said she was asked to submit documents while she was still hospitalised but never heard back from the government.

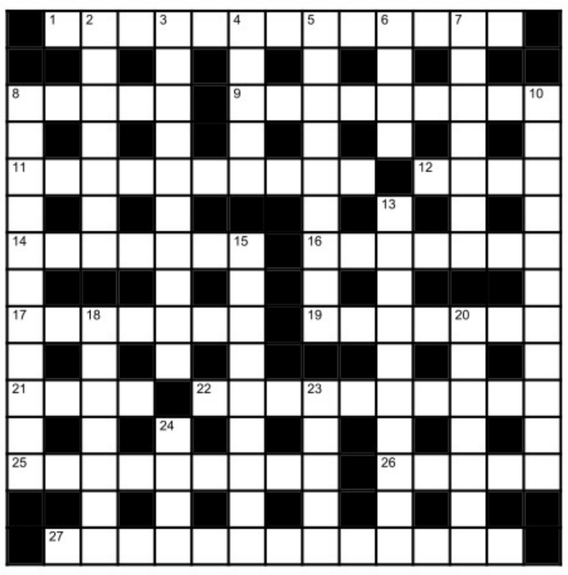
A response was sought from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) on the number of victims yet to receive compensation and the reason for delay, but the CMO did not reply. However, a source at the CMO said 11 victims have been paid so far. "We are yet to receive a clarification from the Delhi Police on the rest of the applicants. The police have not clarified yet whether they really are the victims or have any links with the accused," he said.

TH CROSSWORD + 14677

(set by Dr. X)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at *https://crossword.thehindu.com*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1/21 What nuclear-armed enemies might do to create a sensation (3,3,5,2,4)
8 Scientific head checks piece of microfilm briefly (5)
9 Government worried about drug cartel and mob (9)
11 Regret my cracks about a model's intelligence (4,6)
12 Wild cat's excited, turning most furious (4)
14 Rushed to rest after time travel (7)
16 Belched in bar? Reduce fizzy drinks (7)
17 Utahan lady naughtily showing tongue (7)
19 Excitement about one old 3-D model of scene (7)
21 See 1
22 Consuming bit of stimulant, chatter at rave continuously (2,1,7)
25 Scoundrel in retreat picking up model after work for a very high price (3,6)
26 Article on iridium is belonging to them (5)
27 One injured in Everest can get specialised medical treatment (9,4)

Down

2 Waste matter in old, blue crate (7)
3 Switched to the smart device regulating temperature (10)
4 Number of women leaving force (5)
5 Sick, need month for recovering (2,3,4)
6 Stare as fish goes around river (4)
7 Do cut very artfully, protecting one's fallopian tube (7)
8 Battling outbreak very well (8,3)
10 Chubby woman behind magnificent relative (11)
13 Absolute jerk chasing American associate outside High Court (10)
15 Latest novel has completely fanciful stories (4,5)
18 Obtained pot filled with right, dense layer of soil (4-3)
20 African mammal in barn ate bananas (3,4)
23 Proves devious president eliminated former chairman of KGB (5)
24 European lecturer enthralled by American writer (4)

SUDOKU

		1					2	
					4	6	5	
					8			7
2			1				9	5
9	3						7	1
5	1				7			4
1			6					
	4	7	3					
	5					1		

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

No.SS6745 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

Solution to previous puzzle

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

3	1	8	2	4	6	7	5	9
5	6	2	8	7	9	4	1	3
9	4	7	3	1	5	6	8	2
1	2	5	7	9	4	8	3	6
4	7	9	6	3	8	5	2	1
6	8	3	1	5	2	9	4	7
2	3	4	9	8	7	1	6	5
7	5	6	4	2	1	3	9	8
8	9	1	5	6	3	2	7	4

FAITH

Message through Tiruppavai

Scriptures declare that true sleep is nothing but ignorance – an inability to discern the distinction between the perishable physical body and the imperishable soul that dwells within it. Mistaking the two as one and the same, people continue to whirl helplessly in the vast ocean of samsara. When this fundamental truth is known, realised, and firmly established in one's consciousness, it is said that the person has truly awakened.

Velukudi Sri Krishnan swami in a discourse explained that Tiruppavai, composed by Andal, encapsulates the very essence of the Vedas and serves as a guide that leads us towards this spiritual awakening. In the second pasuram, Andal clearly enumerates what ought not to be done. She exhorts us to refrain from acts forbidden by the elders and the sastras, and also warns against habits such as eavesdropping, slander, and speaking ill of others.

Andal further elaborates on what we should do in the fifth pasuram. She instructs us to sing the Lord's names, contemplate Him and His divine deeds within our hearts, and offer flowers at His feet. This threefold discipline – purity of thought, word, and deed –is known as *Trikarana suddhi* (*manasa, vacha, karmana*).

Andal assures that if people faithfully follow the guidelines she has laid down, there will be copious and timely rainfall without causing distress, and society will prosper in all respects. She further emphasises that this divine bliss is meant to be enjoyed in community, not in isolation; it must be shared with friends, relatives, and the community as a whole, thereby fostering harmony, joy, and spiritual fulfilment for all.

Joint home loans can help families save tax

Ratan Chaudhary

A joint home loan availed by two or more close family members, such as spouse, siblings, parents or children, enhances loan affordability.

It not only divides the repayment responsibility but can also help lower interest rates and improve eligibility for a higher loan amount by combining the income of both borrowers.

Many lenders also offer concessional interest rates on home loans to women co-borrowers, provided they are the co-owner of the property.

The greatest advantage of availing a joint home loan in a double-income household is each borrower can not only save big on taxes but also enjoy increased tax benefits.

How to tax benefits
Usually, a home loan borrower can claim tax benefits up to ₹1.5 lakh on the principal amount under section 80C and up to ₹2 lakh on the interest paid under section 24b of the IT Act.

Double tax benefits on principal
Under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act, each borrower who is also a joint owner of the property can claim tax benefits of up to ₹1.5 lakh per financial year, individually.

Together, the family can save up to ₹3 lakh per year on the principal repayment, which can increase in case of three joint borrowers and owners.

Dual deductions on interest
Under Section 24b, both the borrower and the co-borrower can avail tax benefits of up to ₹2 lakh each on the interest paid for a self-occupied property. Thus, joint owners can save up to ₹4 lakh per year on interest deductions.

All Borrowers co-owners
Each borrower should be a co-owner of the property to claim tax benefits. Someone who is paying the EMI but not a joint owner of the property cannot claim tax benefits.

Moreover, the percentage of deduction should be in line with the percentage of EMI contribution and not the share in the property.

It is also noteworthy that these deductions can be claimed only if the borrowers have opted for the Old Tax Regime while filing the Income Tax Return. By default, ITR filing is processed under the New Tax Regime, and if all co-borrowers aim to benefit from the home loan deductions, they have to file ITR as per the Old Regime.

More savings for woman
Women co-borrowers are usually charged a lower stamp duty, which in turn reduces the overall tax and the cost of acquisition. Some lenders also offer concessional rates to women co-borrowers. When combined with individual tax claims of Section 80C and 24b, it increases the family's tax efficiency. Note that the woman co-borrower should be the co-owner of the property to enjoy tax benefits.

Beneficial for rented properties
There is no upper limit on the interest deduction for let-out properties. Thus, both the borrower and the co-borrower can claim huge tax deductions.

Increased Tax Efficiency
Joint home loans can help distribute deductions among the borrowers to prevent hitting individual deduction ceilings. This is beneficial when one of the borrowers earns more and enters a higher tax slab, thereby reducing the total tax outgo.

Joint home loans not only reduce the repayment burden but also help families reduce the tax outgo and save more.

(The writer is Head of Home Loans, Paisabazaar)

Send queries on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.

Be alert: Review policies periodically to ensure no unfamiliar or incorrect information appears on them.GETTY IMAGES

Life insurance fraud: subverting a noble intent

Fraud pushes up premiums over time as insurers price in this risk. Compliance requirements increase as companies and regulators tighten requirements to prevent abuse

COVERT PLAY

K. Nitya Kalyani

> Claims settlement becomes slower and rigid, as procedures grow more elaborate. This adds to the friction of buying insurance

> Avoid sharing OTPs or sensitive documents over WhatsApp with unknown parties and be suspicious of callers asking processing fee

Life insurance is a promise of security for families. However, where there is money, fraud is rarely far behind. Fraudulent life insurance claims are not new and they are reportedly on the rise in India. One such case surfaced just last week in the crime pages of city dailies. Two sons, whose middle-aged father held substantial life insurance cover, allegedly set a snake on him to kill him for the insurance money - twice. Alert neighbours rushed the man to hospital the first time and saved his life. The sons then tried again, this time using a snake with faster acting venom.

That, coupled with a call to the insurer's claims department barely 15 minutes after the death certificate was issued, brought the fraudulent scheme crashing down. Outright murders for gain like the one above become movies and get copycatted by other criminals.

Meanwhile there are many types of under-the-radar frauds relating to life insurance and you may even become an unwitting party to one and get into trouble with the law.

How does fraud affect you and me, the honest policyholders? Fraud pushes up premiums over time as insurers price in this risk. Compliance requirements increase as companies and regulators tighten norms to prevent abuse. Claims settlement becomes slower and more rigid, even for legitimate claims, as procedures grow more elaborate. This adds to the friction of buying and using insurance and erodes public confidence in what is meant to be a protection product.

Identity theft
There are scenarios that should make every reader pause. Consider the disturbing possibility of a wealthy individual being targeted, with a high-value life insurance policy taken without his knowledge. To make a claim, the perpetrators either need him dead or need documents that say he is. Most people share aadhaar and other KYC documents freely; biometrics can be stolen or fabricated.

The lesson is simple: guard identity documents closely as identity theft can have disastrous consequences. Similarly, documents or signature can be forged to buy bogus policies and support fraudulent claims, sometimes backed by fake death certificates.

White-collar criminals often come with a friendly face and a helping hand. If you have a lapsed policy or are struggling to keep one active, be wary of offers to "help" by paying premiums on your behalf. they will ask for the policy to be assigned to them in lieu of their 'service'. This is illegal to begin with, and insurers will not allow assignment to an unrelated party. A policy is not like a market investment instrument that can be freely transferred by endorsement and delivery. If such an assignment is somehow engineered, remember this again: for the fraudster to cash in, you either need to die - or documents must say you have. It is difficult to even say whom to trust. While your closest ones may be entirely innocent, they too could be misled by someone else.

Protecting oneself
Never buy a policy from an unverified source. Contact the insurer directly or, if approached by an intermediary, verify credentials thoroughly. Ask how you were identified as a prospect. Cross-check the intermediary's details with the insurer and request formal authentication.

Ensure documentation is complete and accurate. Do not cut corners, even if advised to do so for convenience. No one can insist on your Aadhaar number. PAN and other documents deserve equal care. A masked Aadhaar or Virtual ID from the UIDAI portal is sufficient. Consider locking biometrics and unlocking only when verification is needed.

Avoid sharing OTPs or sensitive documents over WhatsApp with unknown parties. Be suspicious of callers demanding processing charges or citing IRDAI norms. IRDAI does not involve itself in policy issuance or require payments. Buying insurance is only the first step. Keep your policy safe, confidential, and active. Review policies periodically to ensure no unfamiliar or incorrect information appears on them. If you spot errors, write to the insurer and have them corrected promptly. Use only official contact details listed in the policy to seek help.

Escalate unresolved grievances to the insurer's grievance officer, then to IRDAI via its portal, and finally to the Insurance Ombudsman if needed. Fraud is like a deadly leak: everyone loses. Regulators tighten rules, insurers add layers of procedure - but the best protection is you: An informed, alert policyholder who refuses to be careless or complacent.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

Compensate for risk

THINKINVESTOR

With appropriate regulatory changes, derivative funds can give a chance to cut direct retail exposure to F&O while enabling NSE to keep price efficiency sans substantial decline in trading volumes

Venkatesh Bangaruswamy

Retail investors suffered huge losses in futures and options (F&O) segment, evident from a SEBI study. Will it help if retail investors are prevented from taking exposure to risky instruments? Here, we discuss why such measures may not always be the optimal answer to helping such market participants.

Risk compensation
Individuals arguably adjust behaviour to maintain a relatively constant level of perceived risk. This is referred to as the risk homeostasis theory. In other words, if an action we take is made safer, we may be tempted to be more aggressive the next time we engage in such action to compensate for the now lower risk.

Risk compensation is debatable. Suppose automobiles are made safer, the argument is individuals are likely to be less careful while driving. Do they? Not all may engage in risk compensation. And those who do compensate may not do it all the time. So, safeguards are good, in general.

If safeguards are implemented to discourage retail investors from taking exposure to some risky investments, will these individuals look elsewhere to assume more risk? Taking more risk while driving a car may not always have an upside, if cars are made safer. But exposure to risky investments could pay off with higher return. So, it is possible individuals will look elsewhere to earn higher returns. Will this be the case given new norms with higher contract values and margin norms have made it difficult for retail investors to participate in the F&O segment? If so, is there an optimal way to moderate their behaviour?

Conclusion
One solution would be to offer retail investors an exposure to the F&O segment through mutual funds and exchange-traded funds (ETFs). While it may not stop all individuals from risk-compensating, it can at least provide an opportunity for such individuals to participate in the F&O segment through professional money managers.

This could include equity and commodity derivative strategies, combining futures, options and their underlying. At the extreme, stylised indices can be created to enable passive funds offer derivatives-based strategies. An example is a covered call strategy (long stock, short out-of-the-money call) through derivatives income ETF, a product that is popular in the U.S.

With appropriate regulatory changes, derivative funds can provide an opportunity to reduce direct retail exposure to the F&O segment while enabling the NSE to maintain price efficiency without substantial decline in trading volumes.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

Personal Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
HDFC Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	2,124 onwards	Up to Rs 6,500
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 3.5%
State Bank of India	10.05-15.05	10,636-11,908	2,127-2,382	NIL till Jan. 31
ICICI Bank	10.45 onwards	10,735 onwards	2,147 onwards	Up to 2%
Bank of Baroda*	10.15-18.05	10,660-12,710	2,132-2,542	Up to 2% (Max. Rs 10,000)
Axis Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	2,124 onwards	Up to 2%
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 5%
Bank of India	10.85-16.25	10,834-12,226	2,167-2,445	Up to 1% (Min. Rs 250; Max.Rs 15,000)
Canara Bank	9.70-15.15	10,550-11.934	2,110-2,387	Up to 0.25% (Max. Rs 2,500)
Punjab National Bank	10.25-16.80	10,685-12,373	2,137-2,475	Up to 1%
HSBC Bank	9.95 onwards	10,611 onwards	2,122 onwards	Up to 2%
Federal Bank	11.99 onwards	11,120 onwards	2,224 onwards	Up to 3%
Union Bank of India	8.75 - 12.20	10,319-11,173	2,064-2,235	Up to 1% (Max. Rs 7,500)
Bajaj Finserv	10.00-31.00	10,624-16,485	2,125-3,297	Up to 3.93%
Punjab & Sind Bank	9.60-13.85	10,525-11,595	2,105-2,319	0.50%-1%
Indian Overseas Bank	10.25 onwards	10,685 onwards	2,137 onwards	Up to 0.75%
UCO Bank	10.20-13.45	10,673-11,492	2,135-2,298	Up to 1% (Min. Rs 750)
IDFC FIRST Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	2,124 onwards	2%
Bank of Maharashtra	8.75-13.55	10,319-11,518	2,064-2,304	Up to 1% (Max. Rs 10,000)
Central Bank of India	9.65-11.55	10,538-11,009	2,108-2,202	Up to 1%
IndusInd Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to 3.5% (2% for instant personal loans for limited period)

*Interest concession of 0.10% to customers opting for group credit life insurance.

Car Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
Union Bank of India	7.40-9.45	9,995 - 10,489	Up to Rs 1,000
Punjab National Bank	7.55-9.45	10,031 - 10,489	Up to 0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 1,500)
Bank of Baroda	8.15-11.60	10,174 - 11,021	Up to Rs. 2,000
Canara Bank	7.45-11.45	10,007 - 10,984	100% waiver till Dec. 31
Bank of India	7.60-12.65	10,043 - 11,287	Up to 0.25% (Rs. 2,500 - Rs. 10,000)
UCO Bank	7.60-10.25	10,043 - 10,685	NIL on all cars & electric vehicle loans
State Bank of India	8.7	10,307	Rs 750 - Rs 1,500
Bank of Maharashtra*	7.45-11.75	10,007 - 11,059	0.25% (Rs 1,000 - Rs 15,000)
Indian Overseas Bank	7.55-12.00	10,031 - 11,122	0.50% (Rs 500 - Rs 5,000)
ICICI Bank	8.50 onwards	10,258 onwards	Up to 2%
HDFC Bank	8.20 onwards	10,186 onwards	Up to 0.5% (Rs. 3,500 - Rs. 8,000)
Karnataka Bank	8.00-11.50	10,138 - 10,996	Up to 0.60% (Rs. 2,500 - Rs. 11,000)
Federal Bank	10.00 onwards	10,624 onwards	Rs. 2,000 - Rs. 4,500
Punjab and Sind Bank**	7.50-14.00	10,019 - 11,634	0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 15,000)
Indian Bank	7.50-9.55	10,019 - 10,513	Rs. 1,000
IDFC FIRST Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	Up to Rs. 10,000
Central Bank of India	7.60-9.20	10,043 - 10,428	No processing fees till 31.03.2026

*0.25% interest rate concession for home loan borrowers, other customers with 6 months relationship with bank.
**Concession of up to 50% on processing fee for PSB Apna Vahan Sugam.
Rates and charges as on December 24

Source: Paisabazaar.com

MOSCOW

Russian response to any European attack will be devastating: Lavrov

AP

Russia does not intend to attack anyone in Europe, but its response to any strike will be devastating, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Sunday, noting the EU's "war party" has become a stumbling block in Ukraine peace efforts. He said Russia appreciates efforts of U.S. President Donald Trump to achieve a peace settlement. PTI

DHAKA

Bangladesh ex-PM Khaleda Zia 'extremely critical', says doctor

AP

Bangladesh's former Prime Minister and chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Khaleda Zia is in an "extremely critical" condition, her physician said. The 80-year-old leader has been undergoing treatment at Dhaka's Evercare Hospital since November 23 for multiple health complications. PTI

LAHORE

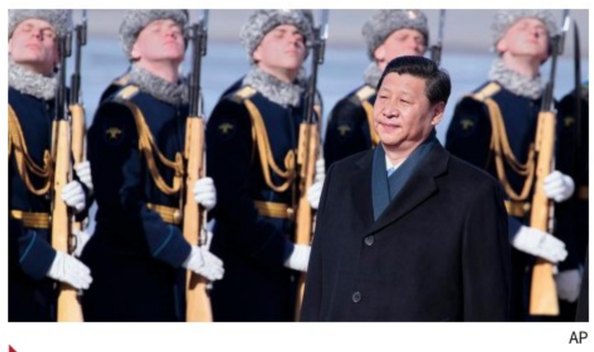
Was advised 'to hide in a bunker' during Operation Sindoor: Zardari

AFP

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari revealed that he was advised to "hide in a bunker" when India launched Operation Sindoor in May this year. "My MS (Military Secretary) had urged me to go to a bunker. I replied 'If martyrdom is to come, it will come here. Leaders don't die in bunkers. They die on the battlefield,'" he said. PTI

BEIJING

China expels three senior military officials in anti-corruption drive



AP

The Chinese Parliament has expelled three senior military officials — Wang Renhua, head of the Central Military Commission's (CMC) Political and Legal Affairs Committee; Zhang Hongbing, political commissar of the People's Armed Police, and Wang Peng, director of CMC's training department — in an anti-corruption crackdown. PTI

Myanmar holds first election since Army takeover; critics call it a 'sham'

The junta has presented the vote as a return to democracy, but its legitimacy is marred by the absence of formerly popular opposition parties; two more polls rounds in January; of the 57 parties contesting, only six are competing nationwide

Associated Press
YANGON

Members of the Union Election Commission count ballots after the closing of polls at a polling station in Naypyidaw on Sunday. AFP

Voters went to the polls on Sunday for the initial phase of Myanmar's first general election in five years, held under the supervision of its military government while a civil war rages throughout much of the country.

Final results won't be known until after two more rounds of voting are completed later in January. It's widely expected that Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, who has governed Myanmar since an Army takeover in 2021, will then assume the presidency.

The junta has presented the vote as a return to democracy, but its bid for legitimacy is marred by the absence of formerly popular opposition parties.

While more than 4,800 candidates from 57 parties are competing for seats in national and regional legislatures, only six are competing nationwide with the possibility of gaining political clout in parliament.

The military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party is by far the strongest contender.

'Theatre of the absurd'

"An election organised by a junta that continues to bomb civilians, jail political leaders, and criminalise all forms of dissent is not an election – it is a theatre of the absurd performed at gunpoint," Tom Andrews, the UN-appointed human rights expert for Myanmar, posted on X.

According to a count carried out at one polling station in Yangon after the polls closed, only 524 of 1,431 registered voters – just under 37% – cast their ballots.

Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's 80-year-old former leader, and her party aren't participating in the polls. She is serving a 27-year prison term on charges widely viewed as spurious and politically motivated.

Amael Vier, an analyst for the Asian Network for Free Elections, noted a lack of genuine choice, pointing out that 73% of voters in 2020 cast ballots for parties that no longer exist.

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, more than 22,000 people are currently detained for political offences, and more than 7,600 civilians have been killed by security forces since 2021.

Zelenskyy meets Trump for crucial discussions on Ukraine peace proposal

Agence France-Presse
PALM BEACH

U.S. President Donald Trump greets Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida on Sunday. AFP

U.S. President Donald Trump welcomed Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy to his Florida estate on Sunday for critical talks on ending the war with Russia.

The two leaders stood outside the Mar-a-Lago resort and addressed reporters as they prepared to discuss a new proposal to end the conflict.

Hours before the meet, Mr. Trump said he had "productive" talks with Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

"I just had a very good and productive telephone call with President Putin of Russia," the U.S. leader said on Truth Social. Following the call, Kremlin said that Mr. Putin and Mr. Trump do not support a European-Ukrainian push for a temporary ceasefire ahead of a settlement, and that Moscow thinks Kyiv needs to make a decision on Donbas.

Mr. Zelenskyy also made crucial discussions en route to U.S., having consulted with allies on Saturday and won renewed expressions of support from EU, NATO and European leaders, according to German Chancellor Friedrich Merz.

China hosts two-day talks to solidify Thailand-Cambodia ceasefire deal

Press Trust of India
BEIJING

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, right, shaking hands with his Cambodian counterpart Prak Sokhonn in Yunnan province. AFP

Top diplomats from Thailand and Cambodia kicked off two days of talks in China on Sunday as Beijing seeks to strengthen its role in mediating the two countries' border dispute, a day after they signed a new ceasefire.

The ceasefire agreement signed on Saturday calls for a halt to weeks of fighting along their contested border that has killed more than 100 people and displaced over half a million people in both countries.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, in a meeting with his Cambodian counterpart, called the ceasefire "an important step towards restoring peace" and said it was "in line with the shared expectations of countries in the region."

Cambodia's top diplomat Prak Sokhonn met Mr. Wang on Sunday. His Thai counterpart Sihasak Phuangketkeow is expected to join the crucial talks on the border situation in the Chinese province of Yunnan on Sunday and Monday.

The ceasefire agreement comes with a 72-hour observation period, at the end of which Thailand agreed to repatriate 18 Cambodian soldiers it has held as prisoners since earlier fighting in July.

China has sought to position itself as a mediator in the crisis, along with the United States and Malaysia.

Brigitte Bardot, French cinema icon and screen siren of 1960s, dies at 91

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

Brigitte Bardot

French film icon Brigitte Bardot, a symbol of sexual liberation of the 1950s and 1960s who turned her back on cinema to devote herself to protecting animals, has died aged 91, her foundation said on Sunday.

"The Brigitte Bardot Foundation announces with immense sadness the death of its founder and president, Madame Brigitte Bardot, a world-renowned actress and singer, who chose to abandon her prestigious career to dedicate her life and energy to animal welfare and her foundation," it said in a statement sent to *AFP*.

Tributes were immediately paid to the star who was became known as "BB" in her home country.

Born on September 28, 1934 in Paris, Bardot was raised in a well-off traditional Catholic household. Married four times, she had one child, Nicolas with her second husband, actor Jacques Charrier.

Bardot became a global star after appearing in "And God created Woman" in 1956, and went on to appear in about 50 more movies before giving up acting in 1973. She turned her back on celebrity to look after abandoned animals, saying she was "sick of being beautiful every day".

Bardot went on to found the Brigitte Bardot Foundation in 1986, which now has 70,000 donors and around 300 employees, according to its website.

'Mourning a legend'

French President Emmanuel Macron called Bardot a "legend" of the 20th century.

"With her films, her voice, her dazzling glory, her initials (BB), her sorrows, her generous passion for animals, and her face that became Marianne, Brigitte Bardot embodied a life of freedom," he wrote on X, referring to the female symbol of the French republic.

"We mourn a legend of the century," he said.

Sport

Charishma and Rithvik dig deep to come up trumps in senior Nationals

BADMINTON

Press Trust of India
VIJAYAWADA

On top: Charishma engaged Tanvi in rallies in the decider. G.N. RAO

Surya Charishma Tamiri defeated Tanvi Patri and Rithvik Sanjeevi got the better of Bharat Raghav to win the women's and men's titles respectively in the senior National badminton championships here on Sunday.

The 19-year-old Charishma defeated Tanvi 17-21, 21-12, 21-14 in the women's singles final.

At the midway stage in the opening game, Tanvi took control of the match and frustrated her opponent to induce unforced errors.

At 6-5 in the second game as Charishma hit a service return in the net. But the service judge called it a fault for height which gave her a reprieve.

Charishma then went on to win seven consecutive points to take control of the second game. In the decider, Charishma engaged Tanvi in rallies and the tiredness began to show on the youngster.

In the men's singles final, Rithvik overcame Bharat 21-16, 22-20. Rithvik was under pressure in the second game as his opponent took a 9-5 lead.

Rithvik bagged six consecutive points to regain the lead before two bad judgement calls allowed Bharat to fight back and earn a game point.

Rithvik, a trainee of Hatsun Badminton Centre in Thiruthangal (Sivakasi), kept his cool and wrapped up the match.

Other results (finals):

Men's doubles: Hariharan Amsakarunan & R. Ruban Kumar bt Mithileish P. Krishnan & Prejan 21-17, 21-12.

Women's doubles: Shikha Gautam & Ashwini Bhat bt Priya Devi Konjengbam & Shruti Mishra 21-14, 21-18.

Mixed doubles: Sathwik Reddy & Radhika Sharma bt Ashith Surya & Amrutha 21-9, 21-15.

Beating Unnati in the quarterfinals ranks high for me, says Charishma

Anirudh Velamuri
HYDERABAD

Surya Charishma Tamiri was in for quite the memorable end to 2025.

The 19-year-old fought back from a game down to defeat Tanvi Patri 17-21, 21-12, 21-14 and clinch her maiden title at the Senior National Badminton Championships.

"I have always watched Sindhu akka and Tai Tzu Ying. Sindhu because she works very hard and is also a Telugu girl like me," she told *The Hindu* after her win.

At the Chennupati Ramakotaiah Indoor Stadium on Sunday, Charishma was pushed hard by Tanvi, who was bidding to become the youngest senior national champion.

"I played to her style initially. She put me in the back. From the second game, my coaches asked me to toss it up and produce more rallies. That worked."

Win notwithstanding, this wasn't Charishma's favourite match of the tournament. "Beating Unnati Hooda in the quarterfinals ranks high for me because she is one of the top players in the world now and has also won international tournaments."

For Charishma's father Naveen Babu, a goldsmith by profession, supporting his daughter's sporting dreams has always been a priority.

"When she was in UKG, we put her in a fitness program. I used to play badminton for fun in Dandamudi and she used to accompany me. Eventually, her coaches in summer camps suggested she take up the sport seriously," he recalled.

Charishma began structured training in the fourth standard, and two years later started working with coach K. Bhaskar, whom she has been training under to date.

"In the under-19s, she didn't play abroad at all. She played only in India and still finished in the top 15. My schoolmates sponsored two tournaments. The Kalamandir Group supported two as well. But you can't keep asking people again and again, right?"

Earlier this year, some relief came when Andhra Pradesh's Minister for Information Technology, Nara Lokesh, stepped in, releasing ₹12,90,000 for her expenses. Charishma has also found strong backing from her college, Chitkara University in Chandigarh.

For Charishma, the focus remains firmly on progress, one step at a time.

"My life's goal is to play in the Olympics. Before that, I want to play international tournaments and break into the top 100," added Charishma.

RARE FEAT

Chamari becomes first Sri Lankan woman to feature in 150 T20Is

NIRMAL HARINDRAN

Chamari Athapaththu made history as she became the first Sri Lankan woman to play 150 T20Is for her country. The skipper achieved the feat during the fourth T20I against India. Harmanpreet Kaur, Danni Wyatt-Hodge, Suzie Bates, Ellyse Perry, Alyssa Healy, Nida Dar and Smriti Mandhana are the others in the 150-club.

MAKING MERRY

Smriti, Shafali register highest partnership for India in T20Is

NIRMAL HARINDRAN

Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma put on the the highest partnership for India in women's T20Is on Sunday. The 162-run stand against Sri Lanka bettered the mark of 143 by the same opening pair against the West Indies in 2019. Smriti made 80 while Shafali scored 79 as the two feasted on the Lankan bowling.

NOVEL SHOWDOWN

Kyrgios gets the better of Sabalenka in 'Battle of the Sexes'

REUTERS

Nick Kyrgios beat women's World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka in the 'Battle of the Sexes' on Sunday, in a highly-publicised showdown with modified rules. Former Wimbledon finalist Kyrgios won 6-3, 6-3 in an exhibition match in Dubai that bore little resemblance to the 1973 encounter between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs.

WOMEN'S HIL

SG Pipers beats Ranchi Royals in the opening clash

PTI

Captain Navneet Kaur and Teresa Viana scored a goal each as SG Pipers defeated Ranchi Royals 2-0 in the opening match of the Women's Hockey India League at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda Astro Turf Stadium in Ranchi on Sunday. Navneet struck in the 27th minute while Viana found the target in the 46th.

Smriti, Shafali help the Women in Blue make it 4-0

The two add 162 for the opening wicket before Richa's blistering cameo powers the host to its best-ever total in the shortest format; Lanka falls short despite a brave attempt by Hasini and Chamari

SRI LANKA IN INDIA

P.K. Ajith Kumar
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Chamari Athapaththu called it right at the toss, at last. She promptly sent India in to bat.

"Thank you," Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma might have as well said as they strode to the middle. What followed was a superlative exhibition of batting, the kind of which you wouldn't get to see that often in women's T20I cricket.

Smriti (80, 48b, 11x4, 3x6) and Shafali (79, 46b, 12x4, 1x6) showed yet again why they are among the most feared batting duos in women's cricket. They put on the biggest partnership – 162 – for any wicket for India in the format, and Richa Ghosh finished it off for India with a blistering cameo (40 n.o., 16b, 4x4, 3x6).

Pure class: Smriti and Shafali showed yet again why they are among the most feared batting duos in women's cricket. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

Record score

The Women in Blue, who were batting first after opting to bowl in the first three games of the series, made a record-breaking 221 for two in the fourth T20I, their best-ever score.

It was always going to be an uphill task for the Lankans, but they did try to make a match of it, Hasini Perera (33, 20b, 7x4) and Chamari (52, 37b, 3x4, 3x6) putting on 59 for the opening wicket inside the PowerPlay. But nobody else could carry on that momentum, and the host won by 30 runs to take a 4-0 lead in the series.

The writing was on the wall for the Lankans right at the start.

Smriti tucked the first ball of the innings, bowled by Malsha Shehani, square of the wicket on the leg-side for a boundary.

Her well-documented mastery on the off-side would follow, but only a little later on in the evening: before that she would get to watch, from the non-striker's end, Shafali put on a masterclass of her own, of controlled aggression. The 21-year-old right-hander had come into this match after scoring 69 not out and 79 not out in the last two outings.

A four through the extra covers off Kawya Kavindi after stepping down the track indicated the innings was just a continuation from Friday night.

Shafali didn't hit a six until she made her third successive fifty of the series, though. She danced down the track to send Nimasha Meepage over long-off.

After Shafali was caught and bowled by Nimasha, Richa was promoted up the order. In the penultimate over, the wicketkeeper went after Kavisha Dilhari (6, 6, 4, 6).

Smriti in 10,000-club

Smriti had already been back in the dressing room, edging her sweep off Malsha to square-leg.

But she had completed 10,000 international runs, though – only the fourth woman to do so.

SCOREBOARD

INDIA
Smriti Mandhana c Imesha b Malsha 80 (*48b, 11x4, 3x6*), Shafali Verma c & b Nimasha 79 (*46b, 12x4, 1x6*), Richa Ghosh (not out) 40 (*16b, 4x4, 3x6*), Harmanpreet Kaur (not out) 16 (*10b, 1x4, 1x6*); Extras (lb-4, w-2): 6; Total (for two wkts. in 20 overs): 221.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-162 (Shafali, 15.2 overs), 2-168 (Smriti, 16.1)

SRI LANKA BOWLING
Malsha 4-0-32-1, Kawya 4-0-43-0, Kavisha 4-0-47-0, Rashmika 2-0-25-0, Chamari 2-0-30-0, Nimasha 4-0-40-1.

SRI LANKA
Hasini Perera c Harmanpreet b Arundhati 33 (*20b, 7x4*), Chamari Athapaththu c Smriti b Vaishnavi 52 (*37b, 3x4, 3x6*), Imesha Dulani run out 29 (*28b, 3x4*), Harshitha Samarawickrama st. Richa b Vaishnavi 20 (*13b, 1x4, 1x6*), Kavisha Dilhari c sub (Kamalini) b Arundhati 13 (*8b, 1x4*), Nilakshika Silva (not out) 23 (*11b, 4x4*), Rashmika Sewwandi b Shree Charani 5 (*4b, 1x4*), Kaushini Nuthyangana (not out) 5 (*2b, 1x4*); Extras (b-5, lb-1, nb-3, w-2): 11; Total (for six wkts. in 20 overs): 191.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-59 (Hasini, 5.3), 2-116 (Chamari, 12.5), 3-140 (Imesha, 15.1), 4-147 (Harshitha, 16.2), 5-170 (Kavisha, 18.2), 6-185 (Rashmika 19.3).

INDIA BOWLING
Renuka 3-0-32-0, Arundhati 4-0-42-2, Deepti 4-0-31-0, Vaishnavi 4-0-24-2, Amanjot 1-0-10-0, Shree Charani 4-0-46-1.

Toss: Sri Lanka; **PoM:** Smriti.
India won by 30 runs to take a 4-0 lead in the five-match series.
Fifth T20I: December 30, Thiruvananthapuram, 7 p.m.

Jaiswal all set to return against Goa

HAZARE TROPHY

Shayan Acharya
JAIPUR

Yashasvi Jaiswal is set to be available for Mumbai's Vijay Hazare Trophy group league fixture against Goa on Wednesday. The India international missed out on the initial matches as he was recovering from acute gastroenteritis.

While there were speculations that he could be available for the game against Chhattisgarh, sources have confirmed that the batter will link up with the team here on Monday evening.

"He is absolutely fine now, and his presence will be a huge boost for Mumbai," a team source told *Sportstar*.

Last week, Jaiswal was rushed to a hospital in Pune, shortly after Mumbai's last Super League fixture of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, as he complained of stomach cramps. Medical investigations revealed that it was a case of acute gastroenteritis, and he was advised a week's rest before resuming training.

With Rohit Sharma playing the first two games of the tournament and opening the innings, the team management did not rush Jaiswal into the side.

Jaiswal. K.R. DEEPAK

It is learnt that Jaiswal is likely to play a couple of more games after the Goa match as well, depending on whether he is picked for the New Zealand series.

Abhishek is back

Meanwhile, Punjab captain Abhishek Sharma is set to be back against Uttarakhand, after having missed out on the previous outing against Chhattisgarh.

Abhishek had a long training session at the Anantam ground on Sunday, where he faced spinners, and bowled some left-arm spin. In the opening game, against Maharashtra, Abhishek scored 48 as his team won by 51 runs.

Carlsen, Goryachkina claim World rapid titles; Humpy, Arjun win bronze medals

CHESS

Sports Bureau

Magnus Carlsen and Aleksandra Goryachkina emerged as the winners at the World rapid chess championship here on Sunday. For India, Arjun Erigaisi and Koneru Humpy won the bronze medals, in the Open and women's sections, respectively.

Defending champion Humpy had tied for the first place, scoring 8.5 points, the same as Goryachkina and Zhu Jiner.

The Russian and the Chinese, however, had superior tie-break scores. They faced off the tie-breaker, in which Goryachkina triumphed.

Reigning supreme: Carlsen and Goryachkina. FIDE

India's B. Savitha Shri had a superb tournament, finishing fourth after starting out as the 67th seed.

R. Vaishali was fifth, Divya Deshmukh eighth and D. Harika 19th.

In the Open event, Carlsen was the clear first with Norwegian finishing with 10.5 points, one more than second-placed Vladislav Artemiev of Russia. Arjun, who also scored 9.5 points, had to be content with third place.

Aravindh Chithambaram was the next best-placed Indian, finishing 16th after scoring 8.5 points.

Nihal Sarin was placed 19th, one slot ahead of the reigning World classical chess champion D. Gukesh. R. Praggnanandhaa was 28th.

The Indians, however, have a chance to perform better over the next couple of days, at the World blitz championship.

MCG curator Page in a 'state of shock'

THE ASHES

Agence France-Presse
MELBOURNE

The Melbourne Cricket Ground head curator Matt Page said Sunday he was in a "state of shock" watching the carnage unfold during the two-day fourth Ashes Test.

Page and his team left 10 millimetres of grass on the wicket, providing fast bowlers with excessive seam movement and bounce which made batting treacherous.

"I was in a state of shock," Page said. "I've never been involved

in a Test match like it and hopefully never involved in a Test match like that again.

"We know this hasn't gone as we planned. We will look at what we need to do to improve."

Page said that cool and wet weather leading into this year's Test combined with forecast heat on days three and four meant he had needed to take a different approach.

More than 90,000 fans were expected for day three and many more for days four and five.

But with ticket sales having to be refunded, Cricket Australia faces another big financial hit after the Ashes series opener in Perth also ended within two days.

Chief executive Todd Greenberg on Sunday estimated that the Melbourne shortfall alone would cost the governing body more than A$10 million ($6.7 million).

International Cricket Council referee Jeff Crowe is yet to deliver his assessment of the pitch, pondering whether to give it an "unsatisfactory" rating which would see the venue slapped with a demerit point.

Goal-bound: The ball ricochets in off Watkins for Aston Villa's first against Chelsea. REUTERS

Villa's surge continues thanks to Watkins

EURO LEAGUES

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Ollie Watkins came off the bench to maintain Aston Villa's unexpected Premier League title challenge by scoring twice in a 2-1 win over Chelsea at Stamford Bridge on Saturday.

An 11th consecutive victory takes third-placed Villa back within three points of leader Arsenal, which it faces next on Tuesday.

On Sunday, Dominic Calvert-Lewin scored for a sixth consecutive Premier League game as Leeds denied Sunderland a place in the top five with a 1-1 draw.

Christopher Nkunku fired AC Milan top of Serie A with a brace in Sunday's 3-0 win over Verona at the San Siro.

Nkunku ended a league goal drought stretching back to February when he doubled Milan's lead two minutes after half-time with a penalty he earned.

Five minutes later he was on hand to tap home the third to give the host a one-point lead over Napoli which won 2-0 at Cremonese thanks to a Rasmus Hojlund double.

The results: Premier League: Sunderland 1 (Adingra 28) drew with Leeds 1 (Calvert-Lewin 47); Crystal Palace 0 lost to Tottenham 1 (Gray 42).

Serie A: Cremonese 0 lost to Napoli 2 (Hojlund 13, 45); AC Milan 3 (Pulisic 45+1, Nkunku 48-pen, 53) bt Verona 0.

On Saturday: Premier League: Chelsea 1 (Joao Pedro 37) lost to Aston Villa 2 (Watkins 63, 84).

Serie A: Udinese 1 (Davis 90+5) drew with Lazio 1 (Vecino 80); Pisa 0 lost to Juventus 2 (Kalulu 73, Yildiz 90+2).

Squeezing in white-ball events not ideal, feel Khare, Bawne

The Chhattisgarh captain and Maharashtra veteran believe that the BCCI should go back to the old format of finishing one tournament at a time and not hold the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and Vijay Hazare Trophy during the Ranji break

CRICKET

Shayan Acharya
JAIPUR

Quick turnaround time in between matches and adapting to different conditions have been a challenge for the teams in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. While teams, which featured in the Super League stage of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy had barely five days to switch formats, it was merely a seven-day break for others.

Calling for a better scheduling, Chhattisgarh captain Amandeep Khare and Maharashtra's Ankit Bawne believe that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) should go back to the old format of finishing one tournament at a time, instead of giving a break between the two legs of the Ranji Trophy, adding the white-ball tournaments in between.

Premier competition: Bawne reckons the Ranji Trophy is like a World Cup for the domestic cricketers. FILE PHOTO: SUDHAKARA JAIN

"It breaks the momentum," Khare told *The Hindu*. "We prepare about a couple of months before the Ranji Trophy, but you don't get much time to get used to white-ball cricket.

"Since there are different teams for white-ball and red-ball formats, players take a bit of time to come together as a unit. It's not an excuse, but it does get a bit difficult for the young cricketers, and it hampers things a bit."

Placed in Group C, Chhattisgarh has lost both its matches in, and will be up against Mumbai on Monday.

While Khare has amassed 152 runs in two innings, the team has struggled, and he believes that going back to the old structure will allow players to focus on one format at a time.

Bawne agreed. "Imagine, if a player found his rhythm in the last two matches, he will suffer again since there's a huge gap.

"It's mentally challenging. Have you ever heard that the World Cup has been stopped midway and teams are asked to play in a bilateral series?

"For the domestic cricketers, the Ranji Trophy is like a World Cup, and that should be given its due importance," he said.

VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY — MONDAY'S FIXTURES

Elite: Group A (Ahmedabad): Karnataka vs. Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan vs. Tripura, Jharkhand vs. Pondicherry, Kerala vs. Madhya Pradesh.
Group B (Rajkot): Jammu & Kashmir vs. Vidarbha, Baroda vs. Uttar Pradesh, Assam vs. Hyderabad, Bengal vs. Chandigarh.
Group C (Jaipur): Goa vs. Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh vs. Maharashtra, Punjab vs. Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh vs. Mumbai.
Group D (Bengaluru): Delhi vs. Saurashtra, Railways vs. Services, Andhra vs. Odisha, Gujarat vs. Haryana.
Plate (Ranchi): Bihar vs. Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh vs. Manipur, Mizoram vs. Nagaland.

Pakistan recalls Shadab for T20Is against SL

Press Trust of India
LAHORE

Pakistan has recalled all-rounder Shadab Khan for next month's T20I series in Sri Lanka but have not called back top batter Babar Azam or fast bowler Shaheen Afridi from the Big Bash League in Australia for the series.

Shadab makes a comeback for the three-match series beginning January 7 after being sidelined since June this year due to a shoulder surgery.

Babar, Shaheen, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali and Muhammad Rizwan, the other Pakistan players in the BBL, didn't get a call-up.

The squad: Salman Ali Agha (Capt.), Abdul Samad, Saim Ayub, Sahabzada Farhan, Fakhar Zaman, Shadab Khan, Faheem Ashraf, Mohammad Nawaz, Abrar Ahmed, Usman Tariq, Usman Khan, Khawaja Nafay, Naseem Shah, Salman Mirza, Mohammad Waseem Jr.

KARNATAKA ROUND-UP

Kashvi to helm Karnataka in BCCI U-15 women's one day trophy

BENGALURU: Kashvi Kandikuppa will lead Karnataka in the BCCI U-15 women's one day trophy to be held in Kolkata from January 2 to 10.

The squad: Kashvi Kandikuppa (Capt), Rohini Dechamma, S. Sheetal, Nesara Sapthagirish, Aarushi Mitra, Avni, Yashika K. Gowda, M. Maria Francia, K. Harshitha, Patil Nynisha Reddy, R. Tanushree, B.A. Nithyashree, Sankepalli Sreeka Chatura, H. R. Saanvi and S. Kashvi.

Onkar and Thejaswi win top honours

MYSURU: Onkar Rajendra Panhalkar and N.I. Thejaswi (both from Bangalore city) won the top honours in the men's and women's 10km race in the 60th Karnataka State cross country championship, conducted by the Mysore District Athletic Association on Sunday morning.

The results:
Men: 10km: 1. Onkar Rajendra Panhalkar (B'lore City, 29:15.7s), 2. Karan Gehandule (B'lore City, 29:16.8s), 3. Guruprasad (Tumakuru, 29:45.3s).

Boys: U-20: 8km: 1. J.R. Kalyan (B'lore City, 24:51.7s), 2. Akhil Kumar (Ramnagara, 24:54.8s), 3. Shailesh Kushwaha (B'lore City, 24:54.8s).

U-18: 4km: Praveen Arjun Arage (Kodagu, 18:19.9s), 2. Chandrashekar Basavaraj (Koppal, 18:37.9s), 3. Laxman Siddappa Hirali (B'lore City, 18:50.6s).

U-16: 2km: 1. Prem Burd (Belagavi, 5:43.4s), 2. Aditya Heggi (Kalburgi, 5:44.2s), 3. Sofiyan Sudhani Jamadhar (Belagavi, 5:46.7s).

Women: 10km: 1. N.I. Thejaswi (B'lore City, 34:44.6s), 2. Aradhana (B'lore City, 34:52.8s), 3. C. Priyanka (B'lore City, 35:06.6s).

Girls: U-20: 6km: 1. Vaishnavi Rawal (Belagavi, 21:25.9s), 2. Shilpa R. Hosmani (Dharwad, 22:50.1s), 3. Tamanna (B'lore City, 22:50.5s).

U-18: 4km: 1. Nagini (Dakshina Kannada, 14:41.0s), 2. Charisma (Dakshina Kannada, 14:53.1s), 3. Akshara Majukar (Belagavi, 15:12.6s).

U-16: 2km: 1. Laxmi B. Obbammanavar (Dharwad, 6:26.7s), 2. D. Megha Ashok (Dakshina Kannada, 6:39.2s), 3. Shreya S. Ghanti (Dharwad, 6:45.8s).

Pawshe triumphs after Mudappa's jump start penalty

Winners all: The National drag champions in each category.

MOTORSPORTS

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

Hanuman Pawshe of Fast Track Racing India (FTRI) snatched the premier unrestricted class title the MMSC fmsci Indian National Motorcycle drag racing championships 2025 at the Madras International Circuit, here on Sunday.

This happened after defending champion Hemanth Muddappa (Mantra Racing) was penalised for jump start in the final run to provide a dramatic finish to the proceedings.

The National champions:
4-Stroke Super Sport Unrestricted: Rider: Hanuman Pawshe (FTRI). **Team:** FTRI.

4S 1051-1650cc SS: Rider: Hemanth Muddappa (Mantra Racing). **Team:** FTRI.
4S 851-1050cc SS: Rider: Muddappa. **Team:** Mantra Racing.
4S 551-850cc SS: Rider: Aditya Acharya. **Team:** Team 99 Racing.
4S 166-225cc SS: Rider: Ali Hussain. **Team:** Team 99 Racing.
4S Girls (Super Stock, 165cc): Rider: Lapis Lazuli (C2 Racing). **Team:** C2 Racing.
4S 165cc Super Sport Indian: Rider: Abdul Shaikh. **Team:** Accsys India Rookies Racing Team.
4S 361-559cc SS Indian (single cylinder): Rider: Mujahid Pasha (FTRI). **Team:** FTRI.
4S 361-559cc SS Indian (twin cylinder): Rider: Sharukh Khan (Mantra Racing). **Team:** Mantra Racing.
2-Stroke 130cc SS: Rider: Syed Imran (FTRI). **Team:** FTRI.
2S 131-65cc SS: Rider: Imran. **Team:** FTRI.

SNAPSHOTS

Head backs opening partner Weatherald to come good after rough start to Test career

MELBOURNE: Australia's Travis Head on Sunday backed under-pressure opening partner Jake Weatherald to come good after an "extremely tough" start to his Test career in a wild Ashes series.

"International cricket is extremely tough," Head told Australian media here.

"The wickets have been challenging across the board the last few years, that's well documented.

"It's not an excuse and I think he's a good enough cricketer for international cricket and I think he showed a lot of glimpses over his first four Tests."

Former England player and administrator Morris passes away at 62

CARDIFF: Hugh Morris, 62, former England and Glamorgan cricketer who later spent time as chief executive of the England and Wales Cricket Board, died after battling cancer. An opening batter, Morris made three appearances for England and helped Glamorgan become county champion in 1997.

LIVE TELECAST

Vijay Hazare Trophy: JioHotstar, 9 a.m.

HIL: Sony Sports Ten 1 & LIV, 7.30 p.m.

Serie A: DAZN, 1.15 a.m. (Tuesday)

Love every bit of Lit.

Literature isn't bound by the page,
It finds you in everything you love.

It moves us in the movies we watch,
hums meaning in the songs we love,
inspires us in the stories we tell each other,
and shapes our perspectives every single day.

Literature finds its way into everyday experiences,
but it's not every day we get to celebrate it.

So come, join the celebration of all things literature
at *The Hindu* Lit for Life 2026.

100+ speakers | 50+ sessions

Banu Mushtaq · D Y Chandrachud, Former Chief Justice of India · Gopalkrishna Gandhi · Kiran Desai · Laura Spinney
Pankaj Mishra · Rujuta Diwekar · Satoshi Yagisawa · Shashi Tharoor · Shobhaa De

January 17 & 18, 2026
9.00 am Onwards
Sir Mutha Venkatasubba Rao Concert Hall,
The Hindu Pavilion & The Hindu Showplace,
Lady Andal School premises, Chennai

Scan the QR code or visit newsth.live/LFL2026 to register for the event.

Presenting Partner: The all-new Kia Seltos
In association with: CHRIST (Deemed to be University), NITTE (Deemed to be University)
Associate Partners: ORCHIDS The International School, IndianOil, IOB, Akshayakalpa Organic
Regional Partner: DBS Bank
Tourism Partner: Bihar Tourism
Bookstore Partner: Crossword

THE HINDU GROUP

The all-new Kia Seltos Presents
THE HINDU LIT FOR LIFE 2026
THE SHARPEST LITERATURE FESTIVAL IN INDIA
In association with CHRIST (Deemed to be University), NITTE (Deemed to be University)